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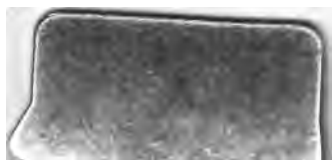
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1995. / 30.





BURFORD COTTAGE,

AND ITS

ROBIN-RED-BREAST.



"Poor thing! Where is he? I shouldn't wonder if he would like to eat a little first, himself."

Page 39

BURFORD COTTAGE,

AND

Its Robin-Red-Breast.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "KEEPER'S TRAVELS," ETC.



New Edition,

EDITED BY

MRS. R. VALENTINE.

LONDON: WILLIAM TEGG.

1861.



PREFACE.

THE work now offered to the youthful public is one which delighted children in years gone by. It was written by the late Mr. Kendall (Author of the very popular work, entitled "Keeper's Travels," and of others of a similar character), by the desire of the late Mr. Tegg (father of the present publisher), and was intended not only to amuse young people by the recital of Robin's adventures, but also to instruct them in Astronomy, Geography, Science, and Philosophy.

The swift progress of scientific research has already rendered much of the original work obsolete or incomplete. A crowd of new planets have peopled space—where then they dwelt unseen—since his "Schoolmaster" instructed "Farmer Mowbray." Lands then nearly unknown are now familiar countries, brought near by steam, and half peopled by our own countrymen. Many a prejudice, or narrow view of high matters, has vanished since the writer traced those pages. Who may say how much their influence did towards effecting this change?

Some omissions have therefore been rendered necessary, and a little additional matter required

to give the tale continuity and connection ; but wherever this has been the case, every effort has been made to preserve the spirit and intention of the Author.

Once more, then, we present the "Robin," which engaged the pen of Mr. Kendall and the pencil of Cruikshank, to our young readers.

Our pert little friend needs no recommendation to the favour of the young or old. He is welcome at every window and by every hearth. If it were only for the delight he affords our children he would always find a welcome and a meal from those who love and cherish the young ; but he has on us the claim of old pleasant memories and many poetical fancies. He is—

"That sweet bird we all can remember,
Who left us when summer shone round,
But when chill'd by dark December,
On our threshold a welcome still found."

LAURA VALENTINE.

BURFORD COTTAGE,

AND ITS

ROBIN-RED-BREAST.

CHAPTER I.

Not content

With every food of life to nourish man,
Thou mak'st all Nature beauty to his eye,
Or music to his ear!—SMART.

"Ah! Maria, there is the short, sweet note of the Robin-red-breast already!" cried Mr. Paulett to his wife, as he turned from one of the open French windows toward the breakfast-table, at Burford Cottage, one fine autumn morning: "we are now only at the beginning of October, and yet the Robin appears to be growing sociable, and as if willing to establish himself among us, against the season of winter frosts. I have heard him once or twice before, at this time and in the evening, out of that fir, beyond the maple."

"O, papa, where is the Robin?" cried little Emily, now in her tenth year; "where is the Robin? Let me see him! Shall I carry him some crumbs?"

"Don't be too much in a hurry, Emily," said Mrs. Paulett: "wait till the weather grows colder, and all the leaves have fallen; and then he will leave his hiding-places, and come to you himself, and hop upon the window-sill, and even into the

room, if you do but save him from the cat. But, if you disturb him now, you will frighten him away, and he will go to some other garden, where there are no impatient children to tease him; and we shall never hear his pretty note, nor see his smooth olive back, and large dark eye, and orange breast, in the bright frosty mornings, or under the dull gray skies of the long winter that is coming!"

"What a very foolish girl Emily is, mamma!" burst forth her brother, Richard, who had lived two years longer than herself: "she is always so *impatient*; she never stays for anything," he concluded, echoing and enlarging upon the word which had been made use of by his mother.

"And are you much wiser or more patient than your sister, Mr. Grave-airs?" said Mrs. Paulett, checking, though with a laugh, the tone of superiority assumed by the young heir-apparent. "You were upon the start, and with an exclamation of an 'O!' at the very moment when your sister thought it best to ask her papa where the bird was to be found, before she sprang away with her crumbs!"

"Yes, mamma," added Emily, with much satisfaction; "Richard is always ready to talk of my faults, but never of his own! Is he not, now, mamma?"

"Ah! you are both alike," finished Mrs. Paulett; "you are as ready to find fault with Richard as he with you; and, perhaps, it is all very well, so long as you are not ill-natured to each other. Both of you are quick-sighted to see the little slips of each; and, perhaps, by your so doing, both of you are improved, and your papa and I are saved a great deal of trouble."

The Robin warbled his sweet note again; but, with the exception of one short-lived moment, the

children were soon occupied too seriously with their breakfasts to do more than look with fitful curiosity at the red and yellow leaves of the trees and shrubs that rose above the flowers, and were grouped around the grass; in the vain hope of distinguishing the little bird that wore the same colours as the leaves, and moved as gently and as silently as the lightest of those which, slightly burdened with the dew, were every moment floating, one after the other, from the spray above to the littered herbage underneath.

"I am glad, however," said Mrs. Paulett, to her husband, "that the Robin has found us out again, and come back to his old quarters; for I dare say that it is the same which we had with us last winter; and, now that all the gayer song-birds of the spring and summer are quite gone, we shall begin to know again the value of the little songs, at evening, and in the morning, of the Wren and Red-breast!"

"Winter would be very silent and cheerless without their songs," replied her husband; "but the music of birds is one of those ordinary blessings which, from its very frequency, ceases to be regarded and valued as it ought. Those who live in climates

‘Where birds forget to sing’

are always struck, on coming to England, with the delightful music of our feathered choristers; and English emigrants in Australia, and our countrymen in the tropics, often express a yearning for the dear song-birds of their native land."

"Have they no birds in Australia, papa?" asked Emily, in a tone of astonishment.

"Yes, very many, and of very brilliant and beautiful plumage, but they do not sing. The Indian

So hard it strove, yet strove in vain,
Its tender plumage, dank, and torn,
Spotting its breast with a crimson stain
As it dragged at the clinging thorn.

That little bird so weak, so true,
Though ages pass away,
Still bears on its breast the crimson hue
That tells of its faith to-day.

And children still the Red-breast greet,
For His dear sake, of whom they tell,
That He suffers the humble at His feet,
And loves the helpless well.'

There is an old legend in the Romish Church that this is the origin of the Robin's red breast,—also, that in our Saviour's crown there were thirty-three thorns."

"Oh, mamma! what a beautiful poem!" cried Richard; "I like it much better than Longfellow's 'Cross-bill,'—and what a pretty story it is."

"There are many such touching and poetical superstitions amongst the people," replied Mrs. Paulett. "The aspen-tree, you know, quivers incessantly: this trembling is said to proceed from the wood of that tree having been used for the Cross. The ass bears on its patient shoulders the sign of the cross, in memory of having borne its Lord into Jerusalem in triumph. The story of the Cross-bill is familiar to you from the pretty little American poem. Then there is the fish, bearing the mark of St. Peter's thumb; and this sweet legend of the Red-breast."

"I like to think they are all true stories, mamma," said Emily, her pretty eyes full of tears. "Everything *ought* to have loved our Blessed Lord, and when I think they did, I love *them* all so much!"

"It is pleasing to observe," said Mr. Paulett,

"how men have ever sought sympathy in nature. Pagan superstitions, and Christian legends, all seek to unite the creation in one bond of love and fellow-feeling. In the old Norse story, when Baldur the Good was slain, he was to be restored to life at the prayer of his goddess mother, on condition that all creation would weep for him. And all creation did weep, *except the evil principle*. Trees dropped honey-dew—pearls stood 'in the pretty floweret's eye'—rivers shed waterfalls over rocks—the sea moaned, and dashed tears of spray into the air."

"And did he come back, papa?" asked Emily, eagerly.

Mr. Paulett smiled.

"No, dear; wicked Loki, their evil spirit, refused to weep, so poor Baldur was not restored to his golden throne in Valhalla. The moral of this beautiful allegory undoubtedly is, that *want of love*, and the disunion caused by Evil, is the chief cause of human sorrow."

"But the Christian legends are the reverse of your heathen tale," observed Mrs. Paulett, "the idea of union and harmony *restored*, runs through them, as that of disorder and the supremacy of evil does through the fables of the heathen."

"A very good remark," said her husband; "I confess the subject of the sympathy of creation with man is a great favourite of mine. I think also, from a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chap. viii. verse 22, that Scripture sanctions such a belief, which certainly engenders a feeling of love for all created things, and this must be good for us."

Emily and Richard, during the time their father was speaking, had been looking very earnestly out of the window, scanning the dead leaves for some glimpse of Robin. Nor were they doomed to be

disappointed. Suddenly the Red-breast hopped from the leaves, and approached the open space before the window, turning his head from side to side, and peering earnestly about with his quick bright eyes, to be quite sure he was safe.

This near approach was too much for the children's philosophy. Heedless of the caution inculcated by their mother, they both sprang from the table, and crying, "Robin, Robin! some crumbs, Robin!" rushed to the window, only to put their timid guest to flight.

"Oh, mama, he is gone! I am so sorry!" cried Emily, turning round with tearful glance. "Do you think he will never come back again?"

Mrs. Paulett smiled.

"You should have been more patient and wary," she said, "your exuberant hospitality could not be understood by Robin; but I have no fear that you have banished him for ever. Winter and want will drive him back to you; and it will be your privilege to help and comfort him, as it is his to cheer and amuse you."

"I will never startle him again," said Emily; "poor little fellow! I wish he knew that I would not hurt him for the world!"

Just at that moment Robin began again the sugary cadences with which the conversation had been opened.

"There," said Mrs. Paulett, smiling, "he forgives you, and promises to come again. And, now, if you have quite finished breakfast, it is time for lessons. Duty must always come before pleasure."

The children rose to accompany their mother to the study, but cast many a lingering glance towards the window as they obeyed.

CHAPTER II.

“A bird of the air shall tell the matter.”—*Proverb.*

It is time now that I, Robin-red-breast of Burford Cottage, should inform the reader that I fully understood and felt grateful for the kind sentiments uttered with regard to me by the young people of the Paulett family. We birds hear much more than is imagined. *We* do not suffer from the confusion of tongues, and are therefore still capable of comprehending the jargon of men. It is a pity they can't understand *us*; they lose much valuable information by their sin-entailed ignorance, for I should like to know what featherless biped amongst them has seen as much of the earth as our winged travellers have? Or who knows so much of human toils, and cares, and mysteries, as we do; peeping everywhere with our little, bright eyes?

And yet, perhaps, it is as well that they can no longer understand the language of the animal creation as they once did, for there *are* indiscreet birds among us, and it is only a sinless race who have no secrets.

Indeed, I am rather amused as I reflect on the disturbances that would arise if man once learned the language of the domestic animals. He would be surrounded by spies, who would make no end of mischief quite unconsciously; and he would have cause to “Beware the dog” (or even the cat) in a different sense to the original one of the Latin warning.

So, for the peace of society, it is as well that when man became imperfect and erring, he ceased to understand the tongues of the innocent members of the creation.

once the fluttering bird, the falling timbers, and the insidious food! Think of me, then, as the victim of all this cunning, and a prisoner in this frightful dungeon!

• After striking my wings, for a second or two, against the bricks and timbers, I sunk upon the earth, confounded, terrified, despairing, and too careless, for a long interval, of what was now to become of me, even to refold my wings against my sides. As to the loathsome food, the reader may well believe, that all of it lay beneath me, and around me, untouched and disregarded! What had I to do with food? Could food throw down my prison walls, or make them transparent to the light of heaven? No; I was plunged into a want more pressing than that of food—the want of liberty! I thought of this only, and forgot, or refused to listen to, my hunger!

But when a quarter of an hour had passed over my head, and my beating heart began to throb less violently, and less audibly, and to suffer the partial working of my brain, what perplexed me beyond measure was, to understand, both who could have built up this abominable bird-trap, and how it could have been built up at all, in the garden of Mr. Gubbins, and especially in that solitary and sequestered part of the garden in which I had found it, and which for its solitariness, had long been my sacred and my chosen haunt? How could the odious brick-trap have been built in such a place? Could it have been built for me? And by whom could it have been built?—built, too, and baited with the delicious fare of Mrs. Gubbins' kitchen, and of Mary's platter! Mr. Gubbins was a preacher against such acts; and Mary and her mother were incapable of them by nature!

"It is the boys, then," cried I; "it is the boys,"

and my heart fluttered anew ; " it is the rebellious urchins of the school-room that have done this thing ; that have stolen into the recesses of the most hospitable garden in the village ; that have escaped the eye of the master, and bade defiance to his commandments ; that have envied Mary Gubbins her little visitant, her little sprite ; and Mrs. Gubbins her household deity ; and Mr. Gubbins the ornament of his stone floor, and the recreation of his meal-times ! They have stolen into the depths of his garden ; they have built a decoy for his sacred Robin ; they have profaned the good man's sanctuary ; and ere long (perhaps warily, by night, or else tardily, to-morrow morning) they will lift the ponderous brick which keeps me here ; clutch me, trembling and yet struggling, in their bold hands ; bear me away to some frightful cage ; treat me with a mockery of food ; and see me pine and starve, and moping with closed eye, and with dirty, ruffled plumage, till, prone upon my back, I lie dead and uncomely, upon the gravel of the board ! This is my fate ! here ends my life of love, and peace, and music ; I sing, now, my death song ; I sing, now, my dirge and elegy ! Farewell, my fellow Robins ! farewell, my mate and young ones ! farewell, my loving mother ! farewell, my brother songsters, to whom I have so often murmured forth my lays responsive ! farewell, ye lawns, and springs, and copses ; ye valleys and ye uplands ! farewell, ye juicy blackberries, ye scarlet haws ; and you, ye blazing, fire-coloured hips ! farewell, ye azure skies ! farewell, thou Burford Cottage, and ye hospitable providers of its table ; farewell, ye tender children, Emily and Richard ! farewell the promise of your winter crumbs, and the sound of your kind voices, as pleasing to my ears, as they have been emboldening to my heart !

and farewell, Mary and Mrs. and Mr. Gubbins, within whose own garden I have fallen by traitorous hands, a victim to the contempt of all your precepts, cares, and anxious prohibitions!"

I should, perhaps, have added more to this long and deep lament, but that at the moment my ears caught the sounds of distant, but always approaching footsteps. They belonged but to a single pair of feet; and I thought I could distinguish, that, as they were not those of youth, so, also, they were not the stealthy ones of him who fears either discovery or reproof: as for me, miserable and overwhelming as was my condition in the trap, I knew not whether to rejoice in the thought of a speedy deliverance from it, or to faint at the contemplation of the misery that was to follow. The feet drew nearer and more near; the path received them heavier and more heavy; I heard the breathing of the fearful one that was moving toward me; the feet came close to the trap; the nearer sound of the breathing told me that my betrayer was stooping down to it; the upper brick was partly lifted; the light of heaven was partially admitted to me; I prepared to fly, to spring, to struggle, to escape to the woods and fields; but a large, strong hand encompassed my body, despised the bitings of my bill, compressed my wings, and held my feet; so that yielding, or rather powerless in limb, panting, breathless, but still unsubdued in spirit; I was lifted, motionless, from the ground, to behold myself in the hand of—the venerable schoolmaster, Ephraim Gubbins!

New hopes, new doubts, new confusion, new perplexity! Was Mr. Gubbins, this time, my old friend, or my new foe? His right hand restrained me; it enclosed me: he did not let me fly; he did not launch me into the sweet evening air; yet he

smoothed the feathers upon the crown of my head, with the forefinger of his left hand, carried my bill to his lips, and tried to overcome my impatience of captivity, by addressing me, in soothing tones, with words of such equivocal meaning as these: "Don't be frightened, my little fellow; no harm shall happen to thee; I would not hurt thee for the world. Wait but till to-morrow, and thou shalt see, I warrant thee!"

"Wait but till to-morrow!" "Wait only till to-morrow!" I was a prisoner, then, till the morrow, whatever after might befall me. I, that till this petrifying hour had known nothing but "free Nature's grace," and against whom no creature and no thing had ever "barred the windows of the sky!" And what was Mr. Gubbins's purpose with me? Was he attempting, by smooth words, to reconcile me to enthrallment? Would he cage me, bind me, torture me; look on me, and see me die, a prisoner? "Wait only till to-morrow!" Did he think, that from the experience of a night, even in the softest methods of confinement, I should renounce, contentedly, the use of my wings; and barter, without heart-breaking, the fields and gardens for the sightliest cage; and the vicissitudes of want and plenty, of warmth and cold, and food and hunger, for the shelter of any roof, or for a perpetual trough of seed, or pan of paste? If such, too, were his barbarous design, by what means was he to pursue it? If the lessons of his life were to be forgotten or reversed; if he would not be ashamed, before his scholars, to be the gaoler of a Robin; yet how was he to get the consent of his family? Would his wife endure it? Would the tears of Mary suffer it? I could find no explanation for all my wonder, as, still holding me, though in the gentlest manner, he walked *hastily through the garden toward the house!*

Arrived at the door of the latter, I reckoned confidently, if not upon a speedy release, through the remonstrances of Mrs. Gubbins and the supplications of her daughter, at least upon a solution of the mystery of my capture and detention. But no! Mr. Gubbins, in his own house, conducted himself with evident secrecy and fear, and wholly concealed me from the sight of his wife and daughter! Slowly, silently, and cautiously, he turned aside from the kitchen-door, and ascended the old staircase to the cockloft! There, to my fresh agony, he placed me in a cage which had plainly been prepared for my reception, for it was largely supplied with food. Round and above it he drew baize and flannels, to keep me warm, leaving an open space, at the same time, for the admission of fresh air; and accompanying all his actions by the repetition of words and tones intended to be soothing and encouraging: "Wait only till to-morrow, my pretty little Robin, and thou shalt see, I warrant thee! I would not hurt thee for the world, my pretty little Robin!"

A few seconds more, and Mr. Gubbins had left me for the night, and descended the old staircase. My amazement equalled my affliction. That it was Mr. Gubbins himself who had laid the trap for me, and who had designed, beforehand, to place me in my present thralldom, was now certain. That Mary and her mother were ignorant of all; that Mr. Gubbins was afraid of their becoming acquainted with it; and that I had nothing, therefore, to hope, either from their reproaches or intercession (unless, indeed, in the extreme case of their accidental discovery of my sufferings); all this, in like manner, was unquestionable. What, then, was to become of me? What was in reserve for me? In the midst of all this disquietude of grief and terror, *I was still incapable of eating or drinking, though,*

as I have said, Mr. Gubbins had omitted nothing to supply my wants in both of these respects. I was supperless and hungry, yet I could not eat; thirsty, and yet I could not drink. But the cock-loft was growing dark, and the night-air becoming cold, and heavy with dew; and weariness and drowsiness crept over my limbs, and placed their lead upon my eyes. I folded my head under my wing, and fell asleep; still endeavouring, so long as recollection remained, to hope the best from all that I had previously known of Mr. Gubbins; from all that had been kind and gentle in him, even upon this strange occasion; and from the hopeful meaning which his tone and manner had seemed so strongly intended to convey, in uttering the words, "I would not hurt thee for the world;" and, "Wait only till to-morrow, and thou shalt see, I warrant thee!"

CHAPTER III.

"Dear is my little native vale:

The Red-breast builds and warbles there!"—ROGERS.

I AWOKE, the next day, before sunrise; but could only by degrees come to the recollection of where I was, and how I had arrived there! I remembered all, only to return to grief, or rather to a dull despondency; and hardly allowed myself the smallest ray of hope from the words of Mr. Gubbins on the preceding night! The gray dawn advanced, and though, in my sad situation, I had little relish for any note of my accustomed morning song, yet partly to salute the light, and partly in the faint hope that Mrs. or Mary Gubbins might hear me

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and restore me to the skies, I sung, two or three times, in my most plaintive manner, all the parts of my little lay. But there was no echo, no response; all was silence in and near my solitary loft; and I sunk into a correspondent, though a waking gloom. I neither ate nor drank, now, any more than in the evening, of the meat and drink of slavery which stood beside me. The cock was crowing in the hen-house; the wren had sung while it was yet dark; I, for my part, was cheerless; a prisoner and alone; and waiting for my fate!

Two hours afterwards, however, I heard a step coming up the ladder; and I flattered myself with the belief that Mary Gubbins had indeed heard me, and would find me, and procure my release! To encourage and to guide her search, and make myself sure of her compassion, I prolonged every note, and gave to each my tenderest and most supplicating air. But, alas! the voice which answered, and the step which followed it, were not Mary's, but her father's; the man who had become so cruel to me and whom now (in spite of his smooth words) so much dreaded. Uplifting the trap-door, and with a hideous cap upon his head (its worst tassel bolt upright upon the crown), the ugly visage was too soon before my eyes, but accompanied with speeches that were at least intended for my comfort and satisfaction, "That's my pretty Robin said Mr. Gubbins; "what, chanting thy morrow song, just as if thou wer't among the springs bushes, and (like any other early bird) hadst found the worm! And so thou hast, my Robin; see," continued he, "I have been into the garden for thee, and dug thee worms and grubs, and *they are;*" saying which he passed into the wooden spoonful of garden-mould, with wo-

insects, of which I had not the smallest will or disposition to take notice!

"I'll tell thee what," presently subjoined Mr. Gubbins, after waiting, in vain, to see me eat, and pushing the dainties toward me, in all directions, to allure me; "I'll tell thee what, my pretty Robin," he subjoined, "I will take thee, cage and all, for the present, to neighbour Mowbray's, now, before anybody is stirring in the street, and before my wife or daughter is in the kitchen, and especially before my boys are coming to school; for it would never do for the young rogues to see their old master caging a Robin; I, that have so long taught them everything to the contrary; and, as to my Mary and her mother, they would break their poor hearts, and be scared out of their seven senses if they thought that I could do such a thing; and, dear souls, they would never be reconciled to my experiment, and they don't know the pains that must sometimes be taken in the search for knowledge! I would not have even Mowbray's wife or children see me with thee, my Robin; for they, too, would be in arms at my seeming cruelty. But Mowbray is a kind neighbour, and a sensible man, and will let me leave thee there for a season, my Robin, and then thou shalt see what thou shalt see! Poor Mowbray, his wife and children will be milking the cows, and looking after the new-laid eggs, to serve the quality in the village; and he will be sure to be moving about somewhere; for, early and late, the honest creatures are striving, and preparing to part with their little all for their sad voyage to Van Diemen's Land. Ah! my pretty Robin," added he, "the poor Mowbrays are going further than thou, and yet they love home as well as thou dost, I warrant thee; and I do not know *what we shall do without them, for they are kind*

neighbours, and there is nobody besides them that sells such good milk, and such nice new-laid eggs! Come along, my little Robin, and let us see where neighbour Mowbray will put thee!"

Saying this, Mr. Gubbins lifted the cage which contained me, and spread over it, for concealment, the coverings which he had by night wrapped about it to keep me warm; and descending the ladder and the stairs, walked hastily down the street with me, to Mowbray's farmhouse. It was yet very early morning. None of the villagers were abroad; the water of a little stream, which flowed gently by the road side, upon which some ducks were just about to make their first appearance for the day, was unrippled by the slightest breeze, but received the shadows of the trees, just as if they fell upon so much glass; and, rising behind an October mist, the great globe of the sun showed its red fire but a little above the gate of Farmer Mowbray's straw-yard. Entering the cart-lodge, and hiding me and my cage, for the moment, beneath a sack, in the corner of a waggon, Mr. Gubbins then left me, to go in search, as he did not fail to say to himself (but talking, as it were to me), of his friend Mowbray, and to make him the confidant of my presence, and of the designs he had upon me; in a word, of the whole subject of my miseries and fears! A few seconds answered his purpose. He returned, bringing with him Mowbray; and now I was carried and locked into the granary, Mr. Gubbins saying to me, during this process, "I told thee, my pretty Robin, that I would not hurt thee for the world, and that thou need'st but wait till the morrow. And now thou and I will have a walk through the fields as soon as I have dined, and thou shalt see what thou shalt see. For, neighbour Mowbray," he continued, addressing all

the rest to the friend beside him; "thou know'st that, like my scholars, I have a half-holiday to-day, because it is Wednesday; and thou know'st, too, that I love to turn my half-holidays to profit, by getting a breathing in the fields, and by studying the works they show me!"

"Ay, Mr. Gubbins," said Farmer Mowbray, "you are right; you are right. You do well to get a mouthful of fresh air when you can, and to look at the green fields, and the blue skies; and to smell the furrows, and to hear the sparrows and the crows. And, by the way, yon's a piece of turnips for you to look at, that's all over as green as an emerald! I often pity you, Mr. Gubbins,—though my boys get their learning from you, and we can never be too thankful;—I often pity you, and think, when I am enjoying myself at plough, or at threshing in the barn there, along with my men, what a hard life you have of it, stived up in your school-room, fastened to your desk, and poring over your books! But, as to that poor bird, it makes me groan (and so it does the mother and the children), that where we are going, we shall never, as they say, see the like of it, nor of any of the pretty warblers that I have listened to, man and boy, along our valley, ever since that I was born! It is a trying thing, friend Gubbins, to leave one's native place, without a hope of returning; and to carry away mother and child to a far country, and over a wide ocean, and to sit down where everything must be strange and *unkid-like*,* and nothing that we have seen before!"

"Indeed it is, neighbour Mowbray," replied Mr. Gubbins; "and we often talk of thee and thine, at the old house, accordingly; and my wife and

* A country pronunciation of *uncouth*, but used in the sense of dreary; melancholy.

daughter cry when they think of parting with thee and thy wife, and thy promising boys and girls, and especially with little Fanny; and 'Squire Paulett, and his lady, and the parson, and the doctor, and all thy neighbours are sorry for thee. But is there no hope, friend Mowbray? Is the die cast? Must thou certainly go?"

"There is but one chance left," said Mowbray; "'Squire Paulett (God reward him for it!) is doing all he can to see me righted; and, if he succeeds, why then we may stay by the old barns, and the old barns may stay by us; but I am afraid of the worst. Might, they say, overcomes right; and, though I know I sha'nt lose the day, if 'Squire Paulett can help it, I fear it's all in vain, all that he is doing for me!"

"It makes me gay as a lark in spring," cried Mr. Gubbins, "to hear that thou hast still a chance; and that 'Squire Paulett, who is always doing good for the whole parish, is still at work for thee; and, with thy cause in such hands, I counsel thee, not so much to fear the worst, as to hope the best; and to look about thee, whether thou, and thy wife, and thy children, cannot yet stay at home, and live upon English ground, and listen to English song-birds! So, fare thee well, neighbour, for this morning, and, as soon as I have sent away my boys, and snapped up a hasty dinner, I shall come to thee for my Robin, and set out upon my journey. Good-bye, Robin; be patient, my little fellow, till noon." Thus saying, he stepped out of the granary, followed by Farmer Mowbray, who locked the door upon me.

In what manner I passed the dreary hours of my continued confinement, from sunrise till the afternoon, the reader, who is aware of what I have described already, will easily imagine! But my

tyrant came at last. Entering the granary with Farmer Mowbray, and setting about to cheer me with his unintelligible words of promise, and of pledge to occasion me no hurt, he opened the cage door; and taking me once more into his terrific hand, placed me within the meshes of a cabbage-net. "There, my pretty Robin," said he, "thou wilt have plenty of air; and nothing will crush thee, nor bruise thee; for, though I must cover thee and thy net with a handkerchief, till we are clear of the village, lest the sight of thee in my hand should breed scandal against old Gubbins; yet, as soon as we are fairly beyond the village, I will let thee breathe, and see the skies and the fields and hedges; and, more than this, thy troubles will soon be over, now." Barbarous man, how can my troubles soon be over, shuddered I to myself, unless my life is to be over too; for when or where is the life that is without its troubles? So, for a minute or two, I struggled as hard as I was able, and bit, and pecked, and scratched, and kicked at the meshes, but to no purpose; and then I sunk again into despair, and lay motionless at the bottom of the net! "Well," said Farmer Mowbray, as Mr. Gubbins led him, by the back way of the farm, and by the side of the turnips; "well, I shall be curious to know the end of it; so, I wish thee success, and I pity the poor bird the while. Remember me to Cobbler Dykes: he will soon make him a halter, and I dare say that you will do it all as it should be, between you both. Good afternoon!"

"'Good afternoon,' repeated I, with horror, to myself! 'Good afternoon!'—'Farewell for ever' would have been the least that Farmer Mowbray should have said, if he had been speaking to me! Cobbler Dykes is to make me a halter! the monster Gubbins will not spill my blood for fear of detection."

and I am to die, not in the light of the sun, and amid the flowers of the field, and while the linnets are singing on the spray, and by the single wickedness of the horrid Mr. Gubbins, but there are two grim conspirators against my life, and Farmer Mowbray is an accessory before the fact! He said he was 'curious to see the end of it;' that is, 'the end of *me*!' I like his curiosity! And this is what Mr. Gubbins meant in the morning, by talking of the 'pursuit of knowledge!' A Robin is to be strangled, in order that a cobbler, a schoolmaster, and a farmer, may grow knowing! And I am to be hanged in a cobbler's stall, as well as stifled with the smell of wax and leather, and my knell is to be rung upon a lapstone! A pretty story for the world, if secrecy were not sure to wrap it in darkness;—if history could ever really tell the tale of

'Who kill'd Cock Robin!'

Mr. Gubbins was as good as his word in one respect, and I feared that he would be equally steady in all his purposes! We were no sooner in the turnip-field, than he took his handkerchief from off the net, and let me see the scenes, and breathe the air around me; and now, being out of sight and hearing of the village, he returned to what I believed to be his hollow, canting, treacherous speeches, about doing me no harm; bringing my troubles to a finish; and letting me see what I should see! Unable to let him know much of my mind, I displayed my anger and discontent by the most perfect silence; and, indeed, thought of little beside the cruel fate which I judged impending, and of the joys and comforts of Burford Cottage, and of the vale in which it stands, which I was never more to see!

"Over brake, and over briar;" over gates, and

over stiles; over pasture, and over arable, through fields and woods,—Mr. Gubbins hurried me along; every now and then, however, caressing me, and disturbing me with the accents of a tongue which, that day, I thought a serpent's for its deceit, and which seemed to me rather to hiss than to strike out any of those silver tones that, before, I had been accustomed to fancy in it! Sometimes, the tinkling of the sheep-bells, and the whistling of the ploughboy; the chattering of the jay, and the screaming of the pie, came on the air; but what delight could I now take in any of these? I, whom two foul conspirators were soon to choke, and to plunder of the power of giving one note to the full concert of the grove? Mile after mile was travelled in this afflicting manner; the beams of the sun, the whiteness of the clouds, the gold and crimson of the autumnal trees, the purple and the yellow of the field-flowers; the verdure of the grass, the lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, seemed to be the celebration of a jubilee; and through all that joyousness, and stir, I and Mr. Gubbins wound our way—to a funeral—an execution; and I the sufferer and the destined slain!

Every now and then, too, Mr. Gubbins, as was natural in a guilty person, either looked carefully behind him, or seemed to stop, as if afraid to overtake some neighbour, to whom his doings might become apparent. How often did he mistake the white bark of a distant birch-tree, shining in the evening sun, for the white apron, or white frock, of an innocent village maiden, coming from market; and the gray trunks of the ash-trees, for the coat or the cloak of some village patriarch or matron, before whom, as before their children, he would have sunk into the earth which he was treading.

to see himself detected in his feats against a Robin? Once, where a gap in the hedge, upon the crest of a hill, and a space between the bank and the remains of a stile, gave place to a solitary post, "Of a surety," cried he, "there is a man—no, it is a boy—and it is Jem Pry, as I am a schoolmaster, and as my name is Gubbins! What shall I do? If I go back, he will be upon my heels; if I push on, I shall be by his side; if I wait till the sun shall be going down, Mrs. Dykes will have put away her tea-things; and the twelve miles which I have to walk (six out, and six to my own home again) will not be finished till late, and Mrs. Gubbins will think that I am robbed and murdered!" After a pause, then, he proceeded, as the only alternative which was left to him; but first carefully covering, with his handkerchief, me and the net which held me. The post speedily showed itself a post, and he returned the handkerchief to his pocket; but, in five minutes after, upon abruptly turning a hedge, he found himself really close behind Ralph Wilcox, an old neighbour and companion, whom he could neither escape nor omit to congratulate upon the yielding of his rheumatism! Hastily replacing, therefore, his handkerchief, he joined Ralph Wilcox, vowed that he was glad to see him, complimented his firm steps, and (what I thought extraordinary) confessed that he was going to Cobbler Dykes'! At the next division of the path, however, he anxiously took leave of Ralph, insisting that the way through the wood in the bottom was the nearest and the driest, though Ralph declared it a quarter of a mile about, and that he would find it wet and spongy with the showers and fallen leaves: "Good-night, then, good-night," said Ralph; "an' ye will go your own way; and mind you tell the cobbler and his wife that I axed after them kindly, and that he must get my

heavy shoes done, now that winter's a-coming. Ah!" continued he, raising his voice, as Mr. Gubbins strode away from him, toward the wood; "ah! you are two comical rogues, for your curiosity and your larning; and you are always a-doing something together, to make you more and more knowing! I's sure you don't carry that there handkerchief for nothing; but that you and the cobbler are after some queer thing together!"

Mr. Gubbins mended his pace, and I sunk into the lowest corner of my net, at words which seemed to import discovery to him, and conviction of my fate to me; "*Comical rogues*," I sighed and murmured! "*rogues*, there can be no doubt; but where does Ralph Wilcox find his *tragic* villains?" I might have lifted my voice while we were in company with that rustic, but I was not sure but that he would have joined his friend for my destruction; and, besides, I feared that if Mr. Gubbins did but hear me tweet, he might pinch my windpipe, or twist my neck, in the concealment of the handkerchief, and kill me unseen, and on the spot!

CHAPTER IV.

"The parted bosom clings to wonted home."—LORD BYRON.

"WELCOME! welcome!" cried Cobbler Dykes, as Mr. Gubbins entered, at length, the village to which he was bound, and drew near to the stall, of which the door was open, and in which, the moment before, the inquisitive and cheerful artificer, was at once hammering his newest leather, and singing his oldest song: "Welcome! welcome! Master Gubbins," he exclaimed; "I see thee'st gotten him, and

now we'll lose no time in doing his business! Poor thing! it's growing latish, you see; and it will be best to do it while there's daylight enough. He will like it the better!" Judge for yourself, reader, of my feelings, at this astounding moment!

"Ah! John," cried Mrs. Dykes, from the adjoining and only other chamber in the house, "thee should'st have had the collar ready, man. But, now late or not late, let Mr. Gubbins have a cup of nice tea before thee meddles with Robin. I have just poured the water into the pot, and the cakes are hot at the fire, and the bird will take no harm while you both take a cup of tea; and then you can make an end of him as soon as you like, and the sooner, I am sure, the better! Poor thing! where is he? I shouldn't wonder if he would like to eat a little first, himself!"

Mr. Gubbins, by this time, had reached Mrs. Dykes' tea-table; and, at her invitation, he did not hesitate to remove the handkerchief from the net, and to lay me, confined as I was within it, upon a second table, nearer to the window. There was room for me to put out my tail, and even my head, through the meshes; and Mrs. Dykes had quickly placed, close to my bosom, and almost in my bill, a heap of bread crumbs, and even a spoonful of cold water; adding to her former remarks, that she "should not wonder, too, if I were dry, as well as hungry!"

Hunger and thirst, what were they to me? and water and crumbs of bread, how could I look at them, when my eyes were occupied with such sights as the cobbler's inner chamber now discovered to my view?—Abating the stall in which he worked, and which, besides its lasts, its knives, its awls, and bristles, held a few strings of birds' eggs, the bill of a crane, and the skull of a weazel;—

abating this, the adjoining chamber, as I have said, was the entire house of the cobbler and his wife; and with such variety and fulness was this chamber furnished, that there was scarcely room for guest or hosts to move; or, moving, to avoid displacing or dislodging something, of which the legs were lost or broken, the fastenings rotten, or the supports unsteady! Here were a bed, and tables, and arm-chairs, and stools, and chests, and worn-out cushions, and pieces of darned and threadbare carpet; but it was upon the walls that hung or stuck the objects that fixed all my thoughts. I say nothing of the blackened canvas-pictures and their dim golden frames; nothing of cups and saucers, India fans, shelly grottoes, sanded churches, ancient almanacs, or older samplers; nor of the plaster casts of busts, and gems, and medals, in this studio of the cobbler virtuoso, besides pebbles, crystals, peacocks' and parrots' feathers, and ears of corn, and feathery tops of reeds, and Gothic watch-cases, with Gothic watches in them, upon and over the mantelpiece; but I beg the reader to pity me, when I tell him that I saw—in glazed black boxes, papered white within,—the feathery coverings, and beaded eyes, of shrivelled and distorted birds, perched upon sticks exactly like the timbers in my trap, and garnished forth with tufts of yellow withered moss, or made to hold, in their dead beaks, beetles as dead as the beaks, and by which, living, they could not have been so detained! For a single instant, I believed that all these birds were yet alive, and that the real secret of my lot was, that I had been brought to be imprisoned in their company; but I soon discovered, in the glaring eyes, the cramped legs and necks, and the smeared and ruffled feathers, that they were but mockeries of living gait and beauty. I

was also soon assisted, by Mr. Gubbins himself, in learning the history of these piteous mummies, and enabled to form a new estimate of the horrors which probably awaited me, when those "comical rogues," finishing their tea, should set about finishing me as well! I learned that Cobbler Dykes was an adept at stuffing birds and beasts; that he stripped off skins as he stripped off upper-leathers; that he pared joints and flesh as he pared soles; and that he sewed up bodies which he had embalmed, as he sewed up seams which had given way! Mr. Gubbins complimented him upon his skill, and admired his last new performances, which consisted, however, not this time in deforming the aspects of birds, but only those of beasts. A grinning kitten, which looked as if it were then drowning; and a monkey, dried, and habited like a sailor, seated in a boat, at his oar, and smoking a short blackened pipe, which the cobbler, with some reluctance, had spared from his own mouth, to adorn the mouth of Pug, were his last works. I took notice that Mr. Dykes had not judged proper to habit Pug as a cobbler, and to give him a bench and apron; as some other stuffer, or at least a sailor, less tenacious of the respect belonging to shoe-mending, would have been likely to prefer!

I saw plainly, at this juncture, the whole of those remaining troubles of my existence which Mr. Gubbins had assured me should soon be over! It was clear enough, with the sights now before me, that Cobbler Dykes was to make me a collar; that I was to be hanged, or at least strangled, perhaps by the united hands of Mr. Gubbins and the cobbler and his wife; and that then, instead of being buried in the shade of a rose-bush, as would have been performed by Emily and Richard, had I

died in the garden of Burford Cottage; or thrown into the next green field, or even upon the next dunghill, as I might have hoped from savages anything short of those that had engaged in the present plot, and in which I might have been swallowed by the first carrion-crow, or given my feathers to the sportive winds, my flesh to the beetles, and my bones to be picked by the ants, who would have left them only in ivory whiteness;—instead of this, after my strangling, I was to be cut and carved, and embalmed and camphorated, and cobbled into the semblance of life, to enrich, years after years, the museum of Mr. Dykes! Was I not to be pitied?

“I think, friend Dykes,” said Mr. Gubbins, “that it cannot be less than fifty years since thou and I found out each other’s tastes for Nature and her works; since we began to collect flowers, and leaves, and shells, and birds’-eggs; and since we used to rise together in the morning to listen to the larks; and go into the woods at night, to drink in, with all our ears, the luscious tunings of the nightingale?”

“It’s true, it’s true,” replied Cobbler Dykes, “but thou always soaredst higher than I; and, not content with the birds, and beasts, and crickets, and butterflies, thou lookedst at the stars, and at the skies that hold them; and wouldst need find out *causes*, and be a philosopher, while I was but a humble naturalist!”

“Ah! Master Dykes,” returned Mr. Gubbins, “thou hadst always a head, too, as well as I; but thou wast more taken with outward figures of things, and I with their inner substance. Yet, though I have given myself to books, and thou hast given thyself to mechanics and handicraft, thou hast persevered in the gaining of natural

knowledge, and art no mean ornithologist, I can tell thee. Thou hast a head, Master Dykes; and I think (though, perhaps, I know not how it happens) that there are not a few examples of artists of thy gentle craft that are curious in books or in nature like thyself."

"I have always been curious concerning birds, I confess," said Cobbler Dykes. "Thou knowest that I have been up early and late to catch them, and to stuff them, and to hang them, as thou seest, about my poor ragged walls. I love the little creatures so much; their feathers are so beautiful, and there is such a variety!"

"Oh! the ogre," I exclaimed to myself; "is it love to injure us thus? To rob us of our innocent lives, for the sake of gratifying an idle curiosity? Truly birds may say especially, 'deliver us from our friends,' if such conduct be a proof of love!"

I omit a great part of the conversation of these men-wolves, and of the witch that managed the tea-cups, partly because much of it had nothing to do with myself, and partly because much more of it consisted in the sickening details (some of them already known to the reader), of my hapless capture in the brick-trap; the full account of which the long premeditation of the violence, the cunning of the artifice, and the chuckling of the triumph all contributed to disgust, enrage, and mortify me. I hasten toward a brighter period; or, toward that part of the table-talk which dissipated my heavier fears, and softened my fiercer anger; which promised me a speedy restoration to my freedom, and only left me to smile at the ignorance, and to resent the frivolous impertinence, which had occasioned me so much pain, grief, terror, thirst, and hunger; but of all which no serious consequence was to follow! I had been brought from home

only to see whether I could find my way back ; and I was to be set free in the twinkling of an eye, though with a leather collar round my neck,—that I might be known for I! The reader will be half as happy as I was, to learn this most favourable change in my day's prospects!

"And yet," said Cobbler Dykes, "though it may be as well to prove it by experiment, I think there is hardly room for doubt that Robin will find his way home, and take his supper in his old quarters, wherever they are, this very evening. The distance is but six miles ; he must certainly know the country ; and, in his way of travelling, neither the distance nor the time can be worth mentioning. They say that the crow flies twenty-five miles an hour, the goose sixty, and the swift ninety."

"Thou knowest," remarked Mr. Gubbins, "that it is only about his finding his way that I am curious ; and that I allow the time and the distance, provided he does not lose himself, to be no difficulties in the matter. Thou knowest, in short, that it has been a favourite notion of mine, that other birds, and indeed other animals of all kinds, find their way home, when they are parted from it, as readily as *pigeons*, though it has not happened that men have taken equal notice in all cases. Thou mayest be sure, friend Dykes, that I expect my pretty Robin to go back without difficulty ; I would not else have exposed him to the trial. I would not harm him for the world ; and I told him that he had only to wait till this afternoon, to see the end of all his troubles."

These words of good Mr. Gubbins restored an entire friendship between us. I forgave him the small sins of all the rest. The forgiveness, too, which I imparted, returned to bless myself. Health and strength came back to me with good-humour.

I could eat and drink ; and I thought that it would be no bad thing to make a meal, before I was set forward on my flight. I pecked at Mrs. Dykes's crumbs, and reached at the water ; and, seeing me thus lively, and desirous of food, every hand began to minister to my comfort and my wishes. Mrs. Dykes put saffron into the water, to cheer me ; and crumbs of cheese beside the bread ; and Mr. Gubbins even produced from his pocket a hard egg, to chop the yolk, and mingle it, with mawseed and milk, along with the crumbs, into a heartening paste. I ate and drank freely ; and though I was not a little impatient for my collar and my flight, I listened with some degree of interest to the prolonged discussions of the two naturalists, which still delayed my journey.

"Thy experiment with thy Robin-red-breast," said the cobbler, "will prove little, because he is already too near home ; but the faculty which all animals possess of finding their way through distances the most remote, and where, to human apprehension, there is nothing natural to direct their course, is certainly among the striking phenomena of nature ; though, at last, it only shows, what we ought to have believed beforehand, that all things are provided with means equal to their necessities. Dogs, cats, horses, oxen, sheep,—all things find their way, in circumstances which often surprise us ; and the return of the dove to his dove-cote is no more, and even (comparatively) much less, than the marvellous return of the swallow to his mansion, of the martin to his temple ; and of so many other birds of passage.

"Thou sayest well," interrupted Mr. Gubbins, "that it is to human apprehension only, that they seem to have nothing natural to guide them ; for their guides, in reality, must be as plainly natural as they are sure and efficacious?"

"And among these," assented Cobbler Dykes, "must be the exquisite powers of their eyes, their nostrils, and their ears. They see, smell, and hear, where, to our limited experience, those functions seem impossible. They take the minutest notice, too (I am persuaded), of the visible forms and appearances of things; and above all, they are directed by the most intense internal sensibility to the state of the atmosphere, so as to be informed of times and seasons, of the hours of the day, of the direction of places, and of the approach and approaching departure of particular weather, or of atmospherical phenomena, to an extent and with a precision of which we can form no adequate idea!"

"As to what thou sayest," again interrupted Mr. Gubbins, "about their taking notice of places—let me tell thee, while I think of it, an anecdote of a dog which I have heard of, from London, since thou and I enjoyed ourselves in this sort of talk; and which will prove more for the reasoning powers of the animal, against a blind instinct, than many longer tales. The dog was of a large size, but not a twelvemonth old. His master lived at the second door from the corner, in one of those numerous streets which cross each other at right angles, in the north-west part of the town; and where the pavement, lamps, steps, doors, and fronts of the houses are all so much alike. I should add, that at the distance of twenty doors, there was a second corner of two crossing streets, almost exactly resembling the first. Now, the full-grown puppy, perplexed by these similitudes, would frequently mistake his master's door, but only to this extent: he would go to the *second* door from the second corner, instead of the *second* door from the first. What did this make manifest, but that the dog did not know the door, or at any time find it, through

a blind and inexplicable instinct, but by the same rule that would have guided his master himself, in any similar emergency? The door which he had to find was a second door from a *corner*; that he knew; and though, for some little time, he often mistook the *corner*, he never failed to fix upon a *second door*!"

"I admire thy story," said Cobbler Dykes, "as one that is more than commonly to the point; and though what I have to give in exchange belongs rather to the whole herd of general stories of the sagacity or reasonableness of dogs, or their approach to human manners and modes of action, yet I venture to recite it. We have, in our village, a terrier, which, at home and abroad, shows his sagacity, in various ways, to the equal admiration of his master and his mistress. At home, if he is hungry, and if the usual supply of food is wanting, his mistress can put money into his mouth, which he will carry to a dogs'-meat shop, and lay down in exchange for a meal. Abroad, his master, who is a labouring man, and whom he accompanies, in the evening, to chat and take a pint, at the King's Head, can send him, with a halfpenny in his mouth, to the bar; and, in his mouth, he will bring back a biscuit in exchange. He neither trespasses upon the biscuit, nor does he carry the money to the dogs'-meat shop, as, in the former case, and for his own food, he knows that he has leave to do."

"Well!" said Mr. Gubbins, "so we go on, adding story to story; but it is time thou madest the collar, and that poor Robin was on his way." The collar was made in an instant, and fastened upon my neck; and now, to my unspeakable joy, amid the good words and wishes of the whole party, I was released from the detested net, and suffered to fly at large.

CHAPTER V.

“To trust again, and be again deceived!”—ANON.

THERE can be no doubt but that Mr. Gubbins' experiment (so very disagreeable to me, who was the subject of it!) was little better than trivial; for how could he suppose any other than that I must know my way for six miles round my nest? Cunning Mr. Gubbins! He did not know how often I had accompanied his own solitary rambles for parts of that distance; or met or overtook him within that circuit from his home, springing from twenty yards to twenty yards along the hedge-rows, and stopping when he stopped, and turning back when he turned back; though all without his giving that particular attention to me which I was bestowing upon him! Cunning Mr. Gubbins! He did not, and he does not know, that if men, and women, and children watch and note the ways, and looks, and figures, and colours of Robins; so, Robins also watch and note the ways, and looks, and figures, and colours of men, and women, and children, their faces and their clothes; and observe new coats, and hats, and shawls, and bonnets; and are pleased and displeased with new ribbons, and new fashions! If Robins, alive or stuffed, are objects of curiosity, and sometimes of wonder and amazement, and I will add, of love and admiration, of pity and compassion, to humanity, why should not humanity, as well, be sometimes the same object of curiosity, amazement, wonder, pity, love, or admiration to us inquisitive, sensitive, tender-hearted Robins? for are not all the universe united in the same bonds of sympathy, and in the same watchfulness of one another's wants, forms,

and ways? Besides, we often have to roam in search of food; and sometimes in search of our straying young ones.

But, though I had gained in this manner, a general knowledge of the country round, yet I had never actually visited Cobbler Dykes' village before the evening in question; and it behoved me, therefore, at my first flying from the fingers of Mr. Gubbins, to look about, and see which way I was to go. I alighted, therefore, very speedily, upon the top of the opposite palings, as well for this purpose as to dress my wings and tail, and to recover myself a little from the nervousness attendant upon my late situation and confinement, of which freedom and the open air now made me even more sensible. As I perceived, however, at the next instant, that all my late acquaintance were in full gape at my doings; as there were but a few yards between us; and as I could not very well be sure of what the *curiosity* of my kind admirers might next put into their heads to do upon my account; I made a second spring, and did not stop till I reached the weathercock at the top of the gable-end of a barn, where I prepared myself for further flight with greater safety, and possessed a view of great part of my way. The place and colours of the light of heaven showed me the road I was to take, and warned me of the lateness of the hour; besides which, I felt the dew descending, and the cold increasing. The gale behind me brought with it other odours than those which belonged to home, and which, even for this reason, I knew to be on the opposite side. It blew off a wood of beech-trees; was scented with the pine, and came dry and sharp over the summits of the hills; while to my native and daily air belonged, in greater proportion, the breezes soft and moist from the streams

and meadows, and the breath of willows, birches, ash-trees, and of rich grass and shining daisies.* Informed of my road, my feathers dressed and nerves restored, I soon after accomplished, at a succession of short flights, the first three miles of my journey; and now I distinctly saw before me the heads of well-known trees, the spire of the village church, the smoke of the village mansion; and even beheld beneath my feet the dingles in which I had often fed, and the waters which I had often sipped and splashed. Looking behind me, I saw, upon the brow of a distant eminence, Mr. Gubbins, striding homewards with all his might; and I should have laughed, if nature had taught me to laugh as well as to sing, at the laborious speed and panting exertion with which he was plainly endeavouring to reach his wished-for home, and make amends for the loss of time incurred through his ingenious-curiosity! Elated at my own superior springiness, my shorter road, and freer yielding element, I scarcely saw him, I confess, before I once more rose into the air; and, tilting as I went, very soon was I beneath the yew-tree, and its berries, in the village churchyard; after which, a few short and jocund trips lodged me in safety behind the laurustinuses in Mr. Paulett's garden. The cat was prowling round it when I arrived, but I swept softly and silently into the large fir above, without her seeing me, or hearing the least rustle; though her uplifted nose and whiskers betrayed and confirmed her suspicions of the taint of prey, diffused in the still evening atmosphere.† I slept soundly

* Day's-eyes?

† The cat-kind have smellers, as well as feelers, in their whiskers; that is, the nerves of smell are elongated from the nose into the whiskers, and to their extremities. It follows from this, that they discover their prey aloft, and through the

till the morning. Mr. Gubbins, as I afterwards collected from his stories to his friends, did not reach home till an hour after me.

When morning, however, came, I found that it was not exactly true, as promised me by Mr. Gubbins, that all my troubles should end with the sunshine of that day. I had taken, hitherto, small account of my collar. From the moment of my freedom I had made frequent attempts to remove it by means of my feet (for I could not reach it with my bill); but I had found it give way; and I was at first too anxious for my home, and afterward too heavy with sleep, to think much of an encumbrance which I believed required only a serious effort to be at once removed. Unfortunate that I was! When morning came, and with it all the morning's strength and vigour, and keenness of apprehension, no effort that I could make would release me from my collar! I was without experience in leathern collars, and without instruments to deal with them. Their infliction and stubbornness, like those of traps, and of other works of human art, were calamities against which Nature has given to Robin-red-breasts no natural defence nor remedy. The burden of the collar was not great, but it totally interfered with all arrangements of my toilet; and, how was it possible for me to show myself abroad, in so hideous, and it must be added,

medium of the air; while, in the contrast, the dog has no scent but for the ground, upon which, as is the common understanding, the *scent must lie*, or he is thrown out of the chase. If the fox, therefore, by leaping, or by taking the water, breaks the line of tainted earth, he thus eludes the *dog*; while the *cat*, destined, especially in the case of birds, to seek its prey where it may never touch the ground, has movable *smellers*, with which to pursue, as it were, and detect it in the air.

so humiliating a disguise? How could I account for it to my fellow-birds? Was I to tell the adventure of the trap? Had I acquired it by misbehaviour? Was it like the fool's-cap of the school-children? Had it been put upon me when I was napping; or, worse, when I was gluttonously feeding, and therefore inattentive! Had Richard or Emily stolen behind me, and slipped it upon me unawares; thereby proving, that though it might be difficult for mice to bell the cat, young children might collar a Robin! So disgraceful a suspicion exceeded endurance. "Ho-ho! ha-ha! hu-hu! he-he! hi-hi!" would a whole flock of Robins, and sparrows, and finches, and tomtits exclaim, with a thousand voices: "so Robin has let Emily slip a collar round his neck; and to-morrow she will catch him, by putting salt upon his tail!" A scene like this it was impossible to meet, even if it were to be no more than thus merry, and if I had nothing to dread from it but ridicule! But ridicule is the first shade of hatred, of anger, and of violence; and who could tell but the disgusted birds might march from jest to pecks and blows, striking their bills and claws, first indeed at my collar, but soon after into my neck and eyes, my muscles and my heart! I was afraid, therefore, as much as I was ashamed. And then for Burford Cottage—for the recesses of its shrubbery—for the enclosure of its lawn—for the microcosm of its flower-beds! Could I be seen in either; or, trusting myself into their precincts, and even warbling behind a pine-cone, or behind the velvet of a dahlia, could I escape the danger of being seen? I had set my heart upon warbling at Burford Cottage in the morning; but I had reckoned *without my collar!* This would have been my joy, my consolation, my reward; nay, more, my triumph! But was I to appear as a

thrall instead of conqueror? Was I to show myself estranged, in a new guise, and as the slave of another; or was I to encourage, at Burford Cottage, by the example of such a display, the belief that it was possible for its inmates to make a slave of me themselves? Such a thought could not be endured!—No! I must hide myself like a guilty thing from the eyes both of birds and men! Oh, Mr. Gubbins, Mr. Gubbins; and oh, Cobbler Dykes, and his atrocious leathern collar!

But mark the end; mark the sorrows consequent upon the collar, and the ministry of those sorrows for its removal; mark the new trials which it brought upon me; the new griefs through which it led me: griefs, however, which were my deliverers, when no deliverance could reach me but through them! Such is often the tissue of worldly events, and to such chequered fate must Robins submit, as well as men! We must grow happy through our tears, and reach the temple of our wishes through the briers and the sloughs of our despair!

I had pined, I had trembled, I had grown faint; I had hungered, I had thirsted,—hour after hour. I had refused the early worm, and the whole morning's meal; but it was now the approach of noon, and I bethought me, that at this season, when all my feathered fellow-creatures were at rest, and not thronging the highways of heaven, I might slip, perhaps unobserved, from my quarters in Mr. Paulett's garden, to those in Mr. Gubbins', where, overcoming my natural antipathy to the scene of the brick-trap, I might yet, obscurely, secretly, and without noise, find a sufficient dinner, a retreat of safety, and an afternoon's repose! I flew, then, timidly and cautiously, passing from bough to bough, and from tree to tree, beneath the covert of the shade, across the brook, into the sunny

paddock ; over the horns of the cows, by the ears of the old horse, once more into the shade, away through the orchard, adown by the parson's glebe, up by the prospect hill, along by the wheelwright's paling, and, then, with a bold and lengthened spring, once more among the elder-trees in Mr. Gubbins' own garden ! It was happiness for me to be there, considering all that I had left behind !

The time of the day was passed when I might have hoped for worms or beetles. They, too, like the birds that hunt them, were at their noontide rest, and safe from hungry stragglers ; but I had been beneath the elder-trees only a short time, when glancing my eager eye upon each side, I saw the very thing which I had hoped for, and which fulfilled all my wishes ! What, then, had I the rapture to behold ? Enough and to spare, of bread and cheese, all set out for me ! And where was this new and undeceitful feast laid out ? Not in the dark hollow of an ugly trap of bricks, nor beneath the overhanging weight, and closing barrier of any dreadful, slanting, ticklishly supported brick cover ! No ; all was fair, and in the light ! Just beside the adjoining pathway, and amid the spreading leaves and flowers of the blue and glossy periwinkle, stood an upright wire cage, the only use of which, in this transaction, appeared to me to be that of raising to view, as upon a platform, the crumbs of bread and cheese which were strewn upon its top ; not, indeed, upon the very top of all and exposed to every comer and common pilferer, but within an attic, open-windowed, and of open wire, without disguise as well : — the snuggest chamber, as it seemed to me, that ever was devised for a hungry stranger to enjoy a meal in ; alone, abundant, not to be lessened by untimely droppings-in of any other hungry guest !

I could not be too thankful for this prepared repast ; nor, except that I dedicated a few moments to looking carefully upon every side, so that none saw me, and none had any chance of cheating me, I could not be too quick in laying hold of the good before me. I sunk down, in my soft manner, from the elder-branches ; but with as much rapidity as if I had seen a grub or beetle just emerging from beneath a pebble, or from out of the mould, I dived into the wire-wove attic. I seized the nearest cheese-paring ; — a wire trap-door snapped down upon me, as quick and noisy as a pistol-lock ; I rushed against the wires before me, to escape immediately from the ill-timed cause of alarm ; — but, alas ! alas ! alas ! I was a second time a prisoner ; and a second time the prisoner of Mr. Gubbins !

My fright, my disappointment, my mortification, were long to tell ; but the issue was short, and the secret soon explained ! I had sulked, and fretted, and fasted in the midst of plenty, in a corner of my new trap, only a quarter of an hour, before I saw Mr. Gubbins advancing, at once to relieve, and as I apprehended, to hold me more permanently. He took me from his cage-trap, caressed me in his bosom, assured me that this was my final trouble at his hands ; told me that he had schemed to catch me this second time only to complete his experiment ; only to be assured of my return ; and that he would take off my collar, and set me free in the woods and gardens, as soon as he had once shown me dressed in it to his wife and daughter, and to Farmer Mowbray and his family, in proof of the success of the experiment, and as a means of ensuring the belief, that he knew me to be the same Robin which he had before caught in his garden ; which he had carried to Cobbler Dykes ; and

which Cobbler Dykes was to come to see again that afternoon. All this he said to me, or rather to himself, and only in make-believe to me; for I hardly fancy that he thought I understood him, or that I had any other chance of finding out the meaning of his behaviour to me than by waiting the event! I received consolation, however, as will be supposed, from what he said; understanding his words, and trusting in his explanations. He had hitherto seemed to keep his faith; he had released me once, after catching me; and I persuaded myself, therefore (and by no means, as will appear, in vain), that he would this second time do the whole that he talked of and professed.

In the short interval, nevertheless, between the closing of the trap and the arrival of Mr. Gubbins, my misfortune had not failed to bring around me the kind attentions of some fellow Robins. My cries, at the first moment of my capture, were heard in the surrounding gardens and thickets; and even my hapless figure seen through the wiry bars of the trap upon the top of the *decoy-cage*, (for the horrid engine was nothing short of a decoy-cage!) had fixed the eyes of my friendly and compassionate neighbours, as they flitted over head. The decoy-cage, for its proper ends and application, consisted of two chambers or compartments, the one above, and the other below, but all transparent, and seemingly but one, through the construction of its deceitful wires! The compartment underneath was a perfect and ordinary cage, in which, according to the plan of the demon who, doubtless, was the inventor, a bird inured to thralldom should be placed; while upon its top, but separated by a floor of wires, was the second and smaller chamber, which had nothing in common with the cell below, except its wooden posts and

transoms, and its iron gratings! This attic cell was of low ceiling, without a perch, without a trough, without a water-lead or glass; without, as I have implied or said, a wooden board or floor, the one as absent as the other; and even without a door—a proper honest house-door—conspicuous by its side, adapted to fair dealing, whether of freedom or confinement! To this detested garret there belonged no door except (oh fitting name!) a *trap-door*—a door first-cousin to a sky-light,—and, in the instance of the wire-door of the decoy-cage, not darker or less transparent than its relation! Now the whole of the treacherous fabric is intended to be seen through—it was not *seen through*, however, by me!—and thus, when a free bird, travelling or disporting in the

“ — empty, vast, and wandering air,”

beholds a brother or a sister, really in the lower den or cellar, but which he thinks to be the entire mansion; he alights, converses, sees good fare, tries the wires, finds the open garret-door; and designing but to pass a social minute, and take a friendly bite and sup, he enters; the trap falls, or snaps-to, like a gun-lock or a mouse-trap; and the fond stranger finds himself at once precluded from retreat; as far as ever from his friend, and plate, and glass; and pent between an iron floor and an iron ceiling, so near to each other that it is much if he can hold his head up between them, till the traitorous fowler comes to remove him from the trap to the dark dungeon, scarcely loftier, and not so large as the vile trap itself!

Thus was I circumstanced. However, I had yet one happiness, and it was no small one, that I was guiltless and innocent;—the injured only, not the injurer! There was no decoy-bird underneath.

The proper cage was empty of a tenant, though furnished with a dinner. But my cries ascended through the bars; they reached the thickets and the gardens; and hence, though the secluded Robins that sat in them might have seemed few or none to any searcher but the sorrowful, I had soon about me one, two, or three; and, soonest of the three, my mother! The pitying strangers, like my mother herself, did all they could to help me; but what was it they could do? I did not seem to be in want of food, or they would have brought it to me in their endearing bills! I could not fly away with them; that they saw, and mourned over me therefore! It was not through a broken wing, or through a wound, or through weakness; or they would have joined their strength to carry me. But I was a sufferer through unnatural means, and such as they had no art to overcome. They could give me, then, nothing but their condolences, and those were not withheld; but condolences bestowed, and sympathy expressed, and kindly hopes imparted, and second visits promised, the pitying strangers, one by one, flew away, and left me; not indeed alone, but to the sole solace of my mother!

She, poor bird, after trying like the rest to set me free, found nothing within her power but to share, as far as wires allowed, my prison and detention; and these she seemed resolved to share with perseverance. Upon a neighbouring spray, she sat an anxious watcher, and returned my sighs, till the sounding path, and shaken branches, announced a human footstep. At that moment, it is true, she vanished to the next tree; for what remained, even to her, at this new shock, amidst all her timidity and helplessness? She, small guardian, had no power, like eagle, or like pelican, or even like dove or hen, to make battle for her young one!

She was a reed in the blast, and must bend! The way of the weak (and by turns we all are weak) is to shrink before the weapon, and to escape only as they fly, or as they are spared. Mr. Gubbins came, and still my mother watched; he carried me toward the house, and my mother hid herself in the thicket; she took with her, grief and fear, and found nothing to help her, except hope!

CHAPTER VI.

“The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship—as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both—that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment its own!”—COWPER.

MR. GUBBINS, so long as the success of his experiment was uncertain, had been very careful to conceal from his wife and daughter; from his neighbours (with the exception of his necessary confidence in Farmer Mowbray, and in his confederate, Cobbler Dykes); from the boys in his school-room, and even from Sukey in the kitchen, the gentle pranks which he was playing with my poor self! But, now that everything had gone to his wish, and all (as I rejoiced most sincerely to hear him say) was over, except the single remaining act of setting me at liberty; now, he was too happy in the reward of his labours; too proud of the issue to which he had brought them; and too bold in the consciousness that he could justify his proceedings, not to spring with the glee and lightness of a child of five years old, bearing me con-

spicuous in his hand, from the trap to the little shed under which all the females were at the moment busy in making elderberry wine!

Quick, however, as were all his motions, and ready as he felt his tongue to give an account, to the utmost advantage, of all his motives, and even performances; swifter still were the acts and words of reproof which he instantaneously drew down upon himself, in the unhesitating anticipation that he had certainly done me wrong. No sooner had he, by showing my little head from the hollow between his bended thumb and his forefinger, unguardedly let it be known that he had caught me in a trap, than these were the exclamations which his pained and terrified ears were made receive:—

“Oh, Ephraim Gubbins,” cried his wife, “how could you!—”

“Oh, father,” cried Mary Gubbins, “how could you;—”

“Oh, master,” cried Sukey, the serving-maid, “how could you!”

And much had Mr. Gubbins to exert himself, with all his eloquence and his explanations, before he was able to pacify, even in some small degree, the heaving bosoms, either of his wife, his daughter, or his serving-maid, as to the hard case in which he had involved poor little Robin-red-breast!

And now Mr. Gubbins explained, in words that it consoled and delighted me to hear, and that again more than half recovered for him all my previous good opinion, the whole mystery of his behaviour to me, and especially of my second entrapment, and of the odious leathern collar upon my neck. It was necessary, he said, in order to prove that I could find my way home, that he should catch me again, and be able to show me,

not only to his family, but to his brother philosopher, Mr. Dykes; and, as Mr. Dykes was an acute sort of person, and not likely to be satisfied with any evidence short of the best, or to consider any point established while, as he was accustomed to say (hanging up his lasts at the same moment), there remained "a peg to hang a doubt upon;" so, it had been necessary to make him put, with his own hands, a collar of his own workmanship round the neck of the little bird, which (not at all by its own consent), had been made one of the three parties to "this great questioning of nature." I was glad that when my deep inquirer bent his thoughts upon "this great questioning," he imposed the suffering upon me, rather than upon an unfortunate ant, or slug, or worm, which might have shown him sagacity, in its degree, as truly as a Robin; and I was glad, beyond all question, that the secret of my terrible collar was now explained, and so explained as to promise me a speedy disengagement. "Ah!" said I to myself, "so it is then, that out of what I thought the accumulation of misfortune, is to come my joy? I could by no means get rid of my collar by my own art; but this second entrapment is the means by which my destiny has come to my relief!" My collar, even in the decoy-cage, had continued to be the bitterest of my misfortunes; and when my compassionate fellow-Robins, and even when my mother came to condole and to moan with me, I kept myself shrunk and huddled together with a two-fold contraction, lest they, or even she, should observe that degradation which added misery even to the narrow limits of my trap. The feelings of shame, and of apprehended ridicule and contempt, with which I *wore that badge* of my bodily thralldom, have *already been explained*; and the reader sees the

broad distinction, which must have belonged, in the eyes of my dear fellow-birds, and even my parent, between the being merely shut up in a trap, and dishonoured by a collar. The trap spoke for me, and told all my story. Any bird, of my size, might have been caught in a trap; but as to how I came by a collar,—as to that, it was possible to indulge in a hundred surmises, and to put on it such constructions as were more than sufficient to ruin, as I have before suggested, my good name, as a bird of common sense, or common spirit. Oh! the collar was detestable. “Dread shame!” has always been the motto of my family, as well as of some other people’s; so, that I had been wretched ever since I wore it, and now became transported when I heard that it was very soon to be taken off!

I was impatient—fearfully impatient for the time; and I confess that I had my anxieties, whether there were not too much probability that I was to undergo another march to our cobbler’s stall and dead menagerie, before the happy event should come upon me! I soon found, however, to my rapture, that an appointment had been made between the two naturalists, in virtue of which Mr. Dykes was to bring home some mended shoes, and take his tea with the wearers, upon that very afternoon; Mr. Gubbins having securely reckoned, it seems, from my unsuspecting simplicity, that I should be caught quite in time for an exhibition at a four o’clock tea-table! My breast blushes redder than ever, to think that everything should have happened to his calculation; and yet, at last, where is the shame of having fallen into the snare of the fowler; and of having been lost, not through any moral fault, but only because I had not greater wisdom than falls to the lot of Robin-red-breasts, or sometimes to the fortune of their betters?

Cobbler Dykes was very shortly at the open door of Mr. Gubbins' mansion; and scarcely sooner at the open door, than across the threshold, and welcomed to a chair. Before he was allowed, however, to seat himself, Mr. Gubbins triumphantly displayed me to him, pointing out my collar, and exulting in the proof thus afforded of my sagacity and power of taking care of myself. Oh, these absurd mortals! no Robin would have seen any cleverness in the matter. All was acknowledged by Mr. Dykes, his "spectacles on nose," as fair, convincing, and conclusive. Mr. Gubbins was congratulated, and the latter looked in triumph at his wife and daughter; and called even upon Sukey to bear witness, as well to the marvel of the event, as to the truth of all that he had previously related. For my part, I thought the whole affair was now so thoroughly complete, that my liberty must be instant.

But still another scene, or more than one, as soon appeared, was to be enacted in my most anxious captivity, before its conclusion. Tea was not yet entirely ready; and though Mrs. Gubbins and her daughter kindly and considerately urged upon the necromancers their duty to dismiss me before sun-down and my bed-time; yet, upon the other side, it was insisted that every possible advantage should be taken of the rare event, during the short interval only that it was to last. Mr. Gubbins' scholars were still upon their forms; and the worthy man (for he was worthy, and if he had a fault, it was only in being too curious about Robin-red-breasts) was, as I have described him, both a schoolmaster and a philosopher; and was fond, in his humble way, and in the humble way of his scholars and neighbours, of joining nature with books, and things with words, for the better in-

struction of his hearers: besides, his adventure with the Robin was now as sure of school and village fame as he could wish; and he was desirous of an honourable report, in the school-room and in the village, as well as in his parlour and his kitchen, of the philosophy and innocence of his motives, and of the success and skill of his experiment. Taking, therefore, Cobbler Dykes as his full voucher, by the arm, he proceeded first to the school-room; and there, exculpating himself from all cruelty of purpose, and all deficiency of veneration for the Jove-protected Robin-red-breast, he bade the charmed and eager scholars view the extraordinary Robin, "returned (that was his comparison) like a long absent and far-sought voyager from the Arctic Regions, and from the Magnetic Poles, to gladden his native and his sympathizing country, and to perch upon his accustomed poplar-tree!" Sorry am I to add, that among the imps to whom this excellent discourse was addressed, I heard several whispering to each other, "I wish it was mine! I could put it in such a nice cage, if I had it at home;" and similar expressions, all inconsistent with the bodily freedom of the whole race of Robin-red-breasts! I say no more, however, upon that subject; except that, in the first place, it was a caution to me, to think always of traps, and decoy-cages, and leathern collars; and in the next, that I am willing to hope the good words of Mr. Gubbins wrought a change in the sentiments of my young beholders, though I did not stay long enough to hear them say so!

The second adventure was to show me to Farmer Mowbray, and to all the family at the farm-house. Mr. Gubbins, besides that he had a little vanity upon the subject, even there, thought it a compliment due to the friendly farmer, to inform him of

the result of the contrivance; and to verify his words by his testimony, in return for his loan of the granary, and for his co-operation and secrecy. Mrs. Gubbins longed to see me upon the wing, but she could not dispute her husband's argument for my visit to the Mowbrays; and, moreover, the kettle did not boil, so it was impossible to deny that with due expedition, the visit might still be made and finished before the tea could by any means be ready. Besides, the Mowbrays were customers of Cobbler Dykes; and who knew but both mending and making might be wanting, before the fearful voyage of the former to Van Diemen's Land; an occasion, too, which at any rate demanded Dykes' affectionate farewell? Upon the whole, then, Mrs. Gubbins showed submission, and her daughter resignation; but the former charged and the latter prayed, my possessor to bring me back, before releasing me, to the offending room which had seen me a prisoner; so that their own eyes might be assured of my deliverance, and that the benediction belonging to the deed should not be lost upon the rafters, nor fail to purify the spot that had been tainted by the sin! I could see, too, that as we left the door (Mr. Gubbins, Cobbler Dykes, and my poor self), the wistful looks and palpitating heart of Sukey went along with a half fearful that there might still be a deception or a disaster; half grudging that another instant should find me still in bondage.

Away we moved, then, to Farmer Mowbray and, there, as before, all my story was repeated and my figure (with the frightful collar, too) posed to every gaze; to the farmer's; to his wife to their six children's; and to three or four neighbours, sitting or standing in the kitchen, and had come to show their regard for the depre-

family. Here, though Mr. Gubbins' reasons were admitted to his excuse, all the party pitied me for the troubles I had undergone; and all seemed to be happy that I was about to be made happy too. Even to the smallest of the tanned-necked and white-headed children I was held down, to be wondered at, and to be kissed; and a lesson, in my behalf, and in that of my fellows, was duteously held forth; but, fortunately, Mr. Dykes early recollected that "Mistress" would be waiting tea, besides being impatient for my release; so that most joyfully did I find our march begun for Mr. Gubbins' fireside!

Brought once more within the hospitable door, it was but a short time before my collar was cut away, and I was set at liberty; but while the scissors were looking for, and while a cup of tea was taking, a few words reached my ears, such as flattered me afresh upon the score of my discovered importance in the volume of nature; and which, therefore, I trust the reader will pardon me for having the selfishness to add to my story.

"And happy shall I be," said the good and tender-hearted woman, "when the dear little bird is on his wings again! I knew that there was something wrong about the house, but I could not tell what; and little did I think that Ephraim had been the man to cause it. Mr. Dykes, as I am a living woman (and I don't care whom thou tellest it to), and as our Mary, and as Sukey, are witnesses of the truth of what I say, on Tuesday night, when, as I now find, poor Bobby was in the cage, in the dark loft, at the top of the house; here, at this very table, I thought I heard our best blue and white china punch-bowl crack, while it stood quietly upon the projecting shelf in the

beaufet (and nobody near it)! And, just a same time, too, all my gilt-edged coffee-jingled upon their hooks, along the shelf in of the punchbowl! And Sukey and Mary (though, poor things, they did not hear the c nor the jingling, not they) that I jumped up moment (as who would not in my place?) went to the beaufet; and there were the cups as still as mice, and the punch-bowl with crack in it, and just as sound as when my dear grandmother gave it to me, forty years ago, and I was married to my Ephraim!"

"Ah! Bridget," cried Mr. Gubbins, "thou live and die by those old notions that thou learnt of thy dear grandmother, when thou used to by her knee, as I have often seen thee, and think I see thee now. But, Master Dykes, knowest, or thou oughtest to know, (a man learned like thee), what is the meaning of all these fancies, which it is the fashion to call old women's fancies; and all which, by the way, more or less of them, are still alive throughout society, and young, and in the cottage and the parsonage too!"

"Why, as to that, Mr. Gubbins," replied Master Dykes, "thou answerest rather too boldly to me; for, d'ye see, though I be a bit of an ornamental logist, and can fit a shoe and hammer a sole for any man, yet I don't pretend that I know everything, as thee dost. Thee hast had books under many a day, while I have been waxing my thread, and though I can think while I wax, and sometimes sing a song; yet, ye see, I can't read at a time; and so my learning has been neglected, and I don't know how I should understand what *believe there are plenty of lords, and dukes, judges, and generals, know as little about as m*

and are sometimes as ready to believe as any your old women!"

"I'll tell thee, then, Master Dykes," resum Mr. Gubbins; "and first let me say, that wh there are many to talk of these things only laugh at them, it is my mind to mention the chiefly to explain them."

"Go on, friend Gubbins, go on," cried Cobble Dykes; "there is no man to do it better."

"Ay," interrupted Mrs. Gubbins; "but he will be a cunning man indeed, if he can persuade me that I did not hear the punch-bowl crack when it did crack; or that it did not sound as if it cracked, because he had caught a Robin-red-breast in a trap, and put it into a cage, and kept it from its mate, all alone in our cockloft!"

"Good Bridget," pursued Mr. Gubbins, "be patient with thy husband; and be satisfied when I tell thee that I think thy heart is right, even though thy learning should be wrong! Master Dykes," he added, "there are few of these old women's tales which had not some foundation in the belief of the old world, that all created things felt for one another; and a kind and a pretty fancy it surely was! Now, doesn't thou see, Master Dykes, that here was *sympathy* between Dame's punch-bowl and coffee-cups, and the Robin-red-breast! The Robin-red-breast was ill used, and so the coffee-cups and punch-bowl were uneasy, and moreover, would have had no objection to set Dame a hunting about the house, till she had found the Robin-red-breast, and had set him at liberty! Thou wilt say that this is nonsense, and so it is; but it originated in the tender belief of which I have spoken—the love of all created things for each other. And is it not a grand thing to suppose one united and sympathizing universe, alive,

through all its parts, to all the joys and all the rows of everything composing it?"

"Ay, sure," cried Cobbler Dykes, half m and half awed at what he was hearing; "and might be excused, mayhap, if he shed tears a thinking of it!"—As for me, I was amazed t that Mr. Gubbins' punch-bowl and coffee-cup have been generous enough to sympathise misfortunes; but, after all, what was it but st ing a little further that sympathy which I, f own part, had actually found in so many h and in so many feathered fellow-creatures?

"And observe, too," continued Mr. Gu "that this is the explanation of a thousand ' ings,' and similar superstitions; such as craki furniture, music in the air, and endless things same sort. All come from the belief in a sym all things have for each other. It is upo ground that the poet, echoing the people, ha that

'——*Murder*, though it hath no tongue,
Can yet speak with most miraculous organ;'

and that, for its discovery,

'*Trees* have been known to speak, and *stones* to mov

"I see," said Cobbler Dykes; "and I am g think that such queer fancies, which always s strangely nonsensical to me, should have s kind feeling for their beginning."

"Well," said good Mrs. Gubbins, "since yc so much about 'sympathy,' which means, I it, feeling for one another, I think you mig well act on it, and set that poor dear bird fr should like to know how you, or Master I *would like some great giant to catch you, and log to your leg that you couldn't undo, in*

to see if you could find your way home with it? If that Robin could understand you, and could laugh besides, it is my opinion that he would laugh at you."

"Oh, father, do let him go," cried Mary; "it is getting quite late, and the poor little thing will want to go to roost!"

And, truly, all this talk about sympathy *had* made me very sleepy.

Mr. Gubbins laughed, and the Cobbler having removed my collar, I was at once set free, and bounded joyously into the pure evening air; thankful for my freedom and my wings, and glad that Providence had made me a Robin, and not a philosopher.

CHAPTER VII.

"Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."—WORDSWORTH.

I SHALL not talk to my indulgent reader of the rapture with which, at length, I found myself absolutely free; nor of the transports and tender welcome with which my return into the thickets and plantations was greeted, by my mother, my mate, and my companions! Suffice it to say, that upon my first flying from Mr. Gubbins' door, almost in doubt but that I should strike my wings against the insides of the wires of another decoy-cage, I perched upon the thick twig of an adjacent horse-chestnut-tree, just behind one of the few remaining fans, presented by its large, but brown and shrivelling leaves. Here, I shook and pruned my feathers, heated, soiled, and disarranged as they were, by all the handling which I had suffered; and scratched

my head, and cleaned my bill, the latter against the smooth and silky bark of my supporting twig. This done, I felt myself refreshed, and had spirits to take a new and longer flight, crossing again the road, or village street, and embowering myself in the opposite gardens. But, arrived within the happier precincts, I was still without the courage to mix at once with my fellows; or even to expose myself to the immediate chance of view. I sat, for the space of a few minutes, in the shelter of a mountain-ash, motionless and silent, "thinking of nothing," and deadened in my feelings. At length, hunched at my shoulders, and moving only my mouth, I ventured upon a meek exercise of my voice; hoping that my watchful mother, or my mate, would catch the sound of even so faint a cry, and thus arrive to witness my restoration, and to rejoin the broken links which should hold me to my species. But I listened, received no answer, became dumb once more, and sat dejected and inactive. Again, however, I called, and, this time, a little louder than before, and yet again received no answer. At this I grew disappointed, fretful, and impatient; but my irritation was of service to me. It roused me to bolder efforts, and to a determination to be heard. I cried again. I said, "Mother, I am here; I am free; those who caught me have let me go!" No answer. "Mother, mother!" I screamed out; "mother and mate, mate and mother, I am here! I am here!"—"Where, where?" returned, at last, the honeyed voice of my mother! "Here, here!" I replied; and "Where, where?" was again her question. "In this mountain ash!" was my reply; but while I yet answered, I had already spread my wings, and was flying in the direction of her voice; and she, too, had been impelled by her ears, even while she cried out

'Where, where?' so, that we met mid-way in the air, and alighted together against the almost upright branch of an eringo-bush, where, at the same instant came my mate, flying and crying, the more strongly both, the nearer she approached us; and now too, our neighbour Red-breasts, discovering the event, came also, with quick songs of pleasure. Ah! you should have heard the mingled and strangely-shifting music of the quire; how expressive, how intelligent, how fond, how plainly descriptive of the story! There was no need of words, for sounds said everything! Sounds asked questions; sounds returned replies; sounds poured out pity; sounds were full of thanks; sounds expressed all emotions;—sorrow, commiseration, joy, and love! Articulation was not wanted; variety of tone and accent is our language, and it sufficed. The bushes rang with our clamour! We Red-breasts, as we have little relish for the society of any other species of bird than our own, so likewise we are not, in general, very sociable among ourselves; but a great occasion, like that which I am now describing, might well lead to some brief departure from our solitary habits!

The sun, however, was by this time descending low, and our suppers were not only to be eaten, but even to be found. We hunted, therefore, and fed, separately or together, as food offered itself to our bills.—I, for my part, fed, but soon grew sleepy; and I slept.

With the first dawn of the morning, I was again awake and hungry; but I was one of nature's commoners by birth, and might make prize of anything that suited me. Worms and insects were stirring, like myself, so that I gave chase as the game rose, and had soon breakfasted. Nothing

remained but to pick up the dainties that might afterward fall in my way, and to visit my friends, and the pretty garden, at Burford Cottage; from both of which, through adverse fortune, I had now been absent two whole days. This morning, at the cottage breakfast-hour, I promised myself a renewal of the pleasures which I derived from them, and from which I trusted never more to be rent asunder!

Sometimes springing, therefore, and sometimes gliding, from bush to bush, and from tree to tree, I found myself, almost as soon as I pleased, in front of the friendly windows; but everything was yet in stillness within doors, and I amused myself for some time, quietly and alone, without.

The morning was bright and warm, and the earth continued heated by the effect of the summer rays, though the sun, for a month past, had sped southward down the ecliptic. The dahlias or georgias,* the asters and the holyhocks continued in luxuriant and gorgeous bloom; there were the soft pink flowers of the tobacco-plant, and the heliotropes, with their large and small "patines of bright gold," still blooming in the borders; and the air was still sweet with jasmin and clematis; the stocks kept their lasting spikes of blossom, and the well-pruned China-roses seemed resolved that even the winter should look as smiling and as beauteous as the spring. With these temptations, too, the windows of the cottage were still as open to the floor, and to the velvet carpet of the grass-plot, as in the most beaming and most flowery of the mornings of July. Thus I saw and heard everything in the parlour, as soon as its guests appeared, but was my-

* It is known that these flowers are variously called *dahlias*, from Dahl, a German horticulturist; and *georgias*, from Georgia, in North America, their native country.

self silent under the foliage; and if I sunk upon the mould, or rose again among the branches, I moved so gently that nothing was struck nor shaken, and that no bending or recovering spray, nor no falling nor rustling leaf, told that I was moving, or had moved.

I confess that I preserved this quietude and silence a good deal in the secret hope, that at least in the course of the family-breakfast that was to begin, my ears would be soothed, and my heart warmed, by overhearing some expression of regret or surprise, that, for two whole mornings, and two whole evenings, I had neither been heard nor seen.

Nor was I long before I received the tribute for which I wished: "The Robin is not come this morning, mamma," said Emily, "any more than yesterday; and I am sadly afraid that I have frightened him away!"

"I hope not, my dear," answered Mrs. Paulett, "for we are all of us pleased when he comes to us; as indeed, everybody is; for the Red-breast is a general favourite. But it was early in the season for us to hear him, as we did on Tuesday last; so that we are hardly to expect him now, or at least, we cannot expect him every day, and must wait till the weather grows colder. You know that the Robin is a very shy bird, and, upon the whole, I am in hopes that he does not keep away because you frightened him."

"Mamma!" said Emily, "is everybody as fond of Robin as we are?"

"I fancy so, my Emily," returned Mrs. Paulett; "and though this particular bird has some peculiar claims upon ourselves, which we will consider another time, yet, in general, the love of nature, and of all natural things, is one of those happy ties and meeting-places that bring all the world

together; gentle and simple, young and old great, the grave, the humble, and the gay. recorded, for example, of Sir Thomas More, Lord High Chancellor of England, the zealous advocate of Grecian learning, that he added to love of all the works of art, an unbounded love the works of nature. Besides his fondness all our native species in the animal creation, if a new or curious foreign beast or bird were brought to London, he was sure to go to see it, and often purchase it, adding it to his collection at Chelsea where he had numerous specimens in natural history, living and dead, in which he and his family took delight, and which he exhibited to his friends—Henry himself, at one period, not excepted. I have not read, indeed, that Sir Thomas More was particularly remarked for his love of Robin-red-breasts; but I have no doubt that, at least, he did not neglect such pretty birds as those, amid his regard for the whole natural kingdom!"

"But, mamma," interrupted Richard, "you said, the other day, that you would let us read, in a book which you would show us, the fondness of a very grave and zealous preacher—who died but lately—for the Robins, and for all sorts of little birds. Here is the book; now, will you help us to find where it is that the Robins are mentioned in it, and let us read what is said about them?"

With both of Richard's requests Mrs. Paulett immediately complied; and the consequence was, that I had the very agreeable satisfaction of hearing, not only how much the worthy gentleman in question used to prize us Robins; but, also, what pains he used to take to please birds of my feather, and to see them when they were pleased; and especially to tickle their palates with the article of *cheese*. The passage which Richard read was con-

taind in a letter to the gentleman's grandson, and ran in such words as these:—"You must know, Adam, that I am very fond of these nice little birds; and often take crumbs of bread and scatter them under the windows, that they may come and pick them up; and once I put a stick in the ground before the parlour-window, with a cross-stick on the top of it, just like your letter T, that you have been learning in your A B C, and often would I lift the window and cry, 'Bobby! Bobby!' and the sweet Red-breast, so soon as he could hear my voice, would fly near the window, and sit on the cross-stick; then, I left the crumbs and bits of cheese, of which they are very fond, upon the ledge of the window; and when I had shut down the sash, then Bobby would come, and eat them all up."

"There is another part of that letter, my dear Richard," said Mr. Paulett, "which I should like you to read; because in it you will find the writer of the same opinion as myself, concerning the value of song-birds, and of beautiful birds, among other sources of the pleasures of human life. Begin after, 'I will give some of them to you, Adam, because I love you;'"—Richard read accordingly:

"Now, my dear Adam, I much like these little birds. Is it because they have very beautiful feathers, and beaks, and legs; or because they sing so delightfully, run so fast, and fly so swiftly? All this, indeed, I love; but I love them most because it was the same good God who made them that made myself; and he who feeds me, feeds them also, and takes care of them: and he made them beautiful, that you and I, and all people, might be pleased with their fine feathers, and sweet singing. Now, a man who has a great deal of money, may go to places where people sing for money, or [may] have music in the house, such as your dear

Cecilia plays; but there are a great many poor people in the world who have scarcely money enough to buy bread when they are hungry, or clothes to keep them warm in the cold weather. Now, my dear, these cannot hire people to sing, nor can they have music in the house, like your mamma, yet they love music; so, would it not be a pity that they should not have some also? See, then, why the good God, who made you, formed so many fine birds, with such sweet voices, to sing the sweetest songs! These are the *poor man's music*; they sing to him for nothing. They do not even ask a crumb of bread of the poor man; and, when he is going to work in the morning, they sing to encourage him; and when he is returning home in the evening, very weary, because he has worked very hard, then they sing again, that he may be pleased, and not grieve nor fret. Now, is not God very good, for making these pretty little musicians, to encourage and comfort the poor labouring man?"*—Here Richard finished his reading.

"Mamma," said, then, Emily, "Mamma, why do they call a Robin 'Robin'?"

"Clever Emily!" cried Richard, interrupting, and enjoying a new triumph over the mistakes of his sister: "clever Emily! to ask why a Robin is called 'Robin!' Why, if it is a 'Robin,' it ought to be called so!"

"Ay," said Emily, "but you know, and mamma knows, what I mean, though you are so quick in finding out that I have not spoken properly! I mean, why is the bird called 'Robin,' which you know, mamma, is a man's name, and not a bird's; I know why it is called a Red-breast; that is, because of the red feathers upon its breast, as any-

* *Life of Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A.*

body may see; but why should a Red-breast be called 'Robin?'"

"Indeed, Emily," said Mrs. Paulett, "I am afraid that I cannot tell you: you must ask your papa. You know that your papa likes you to ask such questions; for he says that there is a reason for everything, and especially for all words and names; and that he thinks it very ill-informed and foolish, when people say, that names or words have no meaning, and that things are called so and so, only because they are so called."

Emily lost no time in putting her question to her papa; but the latter began his reply by confessing that he was not sure he could explain the application of the name of "Robin," though he had his suspicions (he subjoined) as to the real origin. "But first," said he, "you must remember, that it has been a practice, all over the world, to use familiar names for animals, either proper names or descriptive ones, in speaking either to them, or of them. The Swedes called the Red-breast Tommi Liden; the Norwegians Peter *Ros-mad* (or *Red-breast*); and the Germans, Thomas Gierdet. As to descriptive names, the Arabs call a number of animals by the name of 'fathers,' while, by this, they only mean, that they are of a *gray* colour, or coloured like the heads and beards of aged or gray-headed men; and it is thus that you and your schoolfellows," said he, to Richard, "call a certain large *gray* fly, of the gnat kind or figure, by the name of '*Father* Longlegs';—for all the gnats are *gray*."

"But all *fathers*," said Richard, "have not *gray* heads nor beards? You have none yourself, papa."

"The term '*father*,' however," observed Mr. Paulett, "is also applied generally to aged men; and besides, all fathers are old, compared with

boys and girls. But you know that you also make the addition of 'Old Father Longlegs;' an epithet which may either imply that the insect is 'old,' because it is a 'father;' or, that this is an 'old father,' because it is *gray*, while other fathers are young. So much, as to familiar and *descriptive* names of animals. With respect to *proper* ones (as Meg, or Mag, or Margery, or Margaret, for a *pie* or *piet*, and this of Robin, for a Red-breast), there are many which might be mentioned; but I think that this of 'Robin,' which is the French diminutive of 'Robert,' has been given to the Red-breast, in fondness and respect, calling it a *fairy*."

"A *fairy*, papa!" cried Emily.

"Yes, my love, a *fairy*," answered Mr. Paulett, "and only in the best form of that fanciful idea; for I need not remind you, that in all your *fairy* tales and tales of the *genii*, you *always* read of *fairies* and *genii* both good and bad."

"But, papa, why should they call a Red-breast a *fairy*?" still pursued the inquisitive Emily.

"A *good* fairy, because of the gentleness of the manners which we witness in it; because of its entering our houses like a little household god; because of its hanging about us, in our walks, along the hedge-rows or in the woods, like a little guardian spirit; because of the softness and noiselessness of its motions, and of the kindness which it seems to feel for us: for it *receives* so prettily, that we are almost as thankful as if it *gave*!"

"O, papa," said the now satisfied Emily; "I shall love Robin better than ever, now that I think he is a fairy; though I know that fairies are all nonsense, and that there are no such things: but, then, it is so pretty to think and talk of them!"

"Well, since you are so sensible a little girl, and are quite aware that there are no such things as

fairies in reality, though you must continually hear of them; I may add, that I think Gray had some notion (though, perhaps, but indistinctly) of this *fairy* character of the Red-breast, where, in an omitted verse of his famous Elegy, he says,

‘ And little footsteps lightly print the ground ;’

words which may seem to have a double allusion, one to the covering of the Children in the Wood with leaves, by the Robin-red-breasts; and the other to the fabled rings and dances of the fairies.”

“But why, papa,” said Richard, “should a fairy be called Robin, or Robert?”

“I am not sure that I know,” replied Mr. Paulett, “and therefore I will say nothing about that; but so it is, that this name implies a fairy throughout Europe: not the king of the fairies, Oberon; but the most active of them, sometimes called Robin Goodfellow, but who, under another aspect (for it is the same fairies who are good and bad) might also be called Robin *Badfellow*. As Goodfellow he does all manner of acts of kindness, and as Badfellow, every sort of mischief.”

“Then, papa,” continued Richard, “he is the same as Puck, in Shakspeare’s ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream’?”

“He is,” returned Mr. Paulett; “and he is the French ‘Robert le Diable.’ In the ancient history of Limerick, in Ireland, or so long ago as the twelfth or thirteenth century, there is an account of one *Robin Artisson*, a fairy who used to sweep the streets before day-light, only to steal the dirt, and carry it away for manure, to the farm of a great lady in the neighbouring city; who, by the way, and as the story went, used to reward and compel him to his work of plunder by means of offerings of peacocks’ eyes, and other enchant-

ments; whence, at the least, we see that Ireland knew what it was to have peacocks, and knew the value of manure for its lands, even in the twelfth or thirteenth century, if not earlier! While, for the rest, Robin (meaning Robert the Fairy) is or was always the country name of any midnight robber or outlaw; particularly if he were very active, and therefore mysterious, committing violence at several distant places within short spaces of time. There has been one of this sort and name, within a few years past, in Sweden; and I fancy that it was in this character that the celebrated robber and outlaw, the Earl of Huntingdon, obtained the name of Robin Hood. 'Robin Hood' having exactly the same meaning as 'Hobgoblin,' which, in the opposite or bad sense, is the name of Puck or Goodfellow. 'Hob,' like Bob, and Robin, and Dobbin, is a contraction, or at least a change, for 'Robert;' and 'goblin' (though for reasons which it would be too long to tell you now) means one that wears a *hood*. Now, as the meteor which is sometimes called Jack o' Lantern, or Jack of the Lantern, is also called Will o' the Wisp, or Will of or with, the Wisp; so Robin Hood, I imagine signifies Robert of, or with, or in, the Hood; or Robin the Fairy, or Robert le Diable; or, by another term, Robert the Goblin."

"Thank you, papa," said Emily; "I shall think of fairies and Robin Hood now, whenever I hear of our Robin again. They are all namesakes, you see. I am so glad I asked you why he was called by that name!"

"Never be ashamed or afraid to ask for information," replied her papa, kindly; "especially regard to names, or words, which often contain much useful knowledge in themselves."

"And I," said Richard, "won't laugh at y

more for asking; but really it seemed so silly to ask why Robin was called Robin!"

Mrs. Paulett, here took occasion to remark, that the humility of his sister was more encouraging to them than his own quickness and contempt of others; and Richard listened to her with ingenuous shame, at his recent conceit of himself, and disdain of Emily."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Emily, at this juncture; "oh! I do think I see Robin-red-breast again, under the leaves of his old tree!" And in truth I certainly had let myself be seen in the course of the joyous movements of my head and tail, to which I was inspired by all the pleasant things which I had heard about myself, and about Robins in general. I had hopped and picked the time away, trusting that I should either see some crumbs, or hear of myself once more; and so, as I have said, it happened!

"Where, where?" cried Richard; and Emily pointed to the tree; but, now, I was no longer visible.

"Oh! I hope you saw him!" said Richard. "And I hope so too," said Mrs. Paulett. So, charmed with the kind wishes of my friends, I sung one of my blithest songs, at which every face smiled, and in which I bade them at once good-morrow and farewell for the day.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth."—WORDSWORTH.

MR. GUBBINS was sent for, the morning after his experiment, by Mr. Paulett, to hear the result of the exertions which that gentleman had made to arrange poor Farmer Mowbray's affairs. In the days to which this story belongs, emigration was far less common than it is now, and the heart of the Englishman clung with a strong yearning to his home, and to the land of his fathers. The thought of leaving his hereditary fields, the old village church, and the kind neighbours of his whole life, had nearly broken poor Mowbray's heart, and Mr. Paulett had spent time, and thought, and money, in endeavouring to save him from the dreaded necessity.

"Well, Gubbins," cried he, as the schoolmaster entered the room, "I have good news for you! My lawyer tells me that he has made our poor neighbour's matters all right. The claims against him are set aside, and I intend to lend him enough to go on with, till his farm shall prove more prosperous."

"Thank God, and you, Sir," said the schoolmaster, fervently; "I don't know when I have heard news which has made my heart so glad before. Farmer Mowbray will be most grateful, for he clung to the old place, and would never have taken to a new country, and its ways. It is all very well, Sir, for young men to emigrate, and go *and seek their fortune* as the princes in fairy tales *are said to have done*; but aged folks haven't the

heart for it. Association takes with them the place of earthly hope."

"Very true, Mr. Gubbins. Well! now Farmer Mowbray may hope to dwell under the old roof-tree for the rest of his days. I sent for you, that you might be the bearer of the good news to him."

"Thank you, Sir, I am sure. I take it very kindly of you."

"And how is your great friend Cobbler Dykes?" asked the 'Squire, kindly. "Do you still study nature together, as you used?"

Mr. Gubbins smiled modestly, and smoothed his hat.

"When we can find leisure, Sir, we do try a few experiments in our humble way. Yesterday we made, I think I may say, a very successful one."

"Indeed! What might it be?" And Mr. Gubbins replied, by giving *his* version of poor Robin's captivity.

The 'Squire smiled kindly as he listened. He was always pleased to find such tastes among the country people. He knew that the study of God's works will raise the mind to their Creator, and that it occupies, beneficially, the leisure too often spent in the alehouse.

"I am glad you and your friend found so much satisfaction in your experiment," said he, when the recital closed. "And, do you know, I have felt double interest in your captive Robin, as I believe he is a little pet of my children, and that his two days' absence from our breakfast-table is accounted for by your story. Would you oblige me by repeating it to them? They would be greatly amused by it."

And he rang the bell, and ordered Richard and Emily to be sent to him. They obeyed the sum-

mons at once, and listened with eager interest and great pity for Robin, to Mr. Gubbins' story.

"Well, Emily, what do you think of this explanation of your feathered friend's absence," asked her papa, when the tale was closed.

"I am glad he did not stay away because I frightened him," replied the little girl; "but why did you think, Mr. Gubbins, that Robin could not find his way home? I thought all birds could."

"I confess I share her surprise," said Mr. Paulett. "I think you might have been sure that Robin could return from so short a distance as six miles; for, though not a migratory bird, he is capable of long flights, and fear of a strange neighbourhood would be a powerful motive to drive him to his own home. You know birds, and indeed all the inferior animals, are generally unfriendly to strangers, and will peck at, and drive away, intruders. It is an instinct needful for their preservation, which makes them thus inhospitable. The supply of food would probably fail, if interlopers were encouraged; while there would be enough for all, if they remained in their own districts. The flocks, or rather clouds of gannets, *sea*-pelicans, or Solan geese, which, in the summer season, inhabit the great insular rock of Ailsa in the Frith of Clyde, while they dwell and migrate, in general terms, always together, yet preserve inviolably a separation of communities; arrive in the spring in separate though large parties; depart in the autumn in separate though large parties; live and build upon the rock in the same separate parties, and on separate parts; and if, by the arrival of a boat, a general alarm is given to the whole feathered population, they take to their wings in separate clouds or parties: each party, as it wheels and screams around and above the rock, in white-

ness and in multitude most like a snow-storm, occupies only its own *district* (so to call it) in the air, above or below its fellows, and never intermixes. The same adherence to separate dwelling-places is very remarkable in the dogs of Constantinople, which have no masters, and dwell entirely in the streets. As they subsist wholly on charity, or on what they pick up, *instinct* teaches them a division of labour; and therefore, in the same manner as a well-regulated society of beggars has separate walks for its members, they divide the city and its suburbs into districts. *Were a dog found in a strange quarter, he would infallibly be torn to pieces by the resident dogs*; and so well are they aware of this, that no argument—not even a bone of roast-meat—will induce a dog to follow a person beyond his district; a singular and well-authenticated fact. A recent traveller tells us that he caressed, for experiment, one of these animals, whose post, with many others, was near the Meleri Khan; he daily fed him, till he became fat and sleek, and carried his tail high, and was no longer to be recognized for his former self. With his physical, his moral qualities improved. He lost his currishness, and when his patrons approached, expressed gratitude by licking their hands, &c.; yet he would never follow them beyond an *imaginary limit*, either way, where he would stop, wag his tail, and look wistfully after them till they were out of sight, and then return to his post. Once only the traveller saw him overstep his limit; he was very hungry, and he was alluring him with tempting food; but he had not exceeded twenty yards *when he recollected himself*, and ran hastily back. I conclude, therefore, that your Robin was too unsafe, even from his own species, while in a strange *district*, not to make all the haste home that he possibly could."

"Poor little fellow!" said Richard; "he must have been terribly frightened with his collar, and with being caged, and carried about so! I wonder he ever came back to us. If I had been so caught, I should have kept out of the way of human beings for ever afterwards."

"But Robin knows his friends from his foes!" cried Emily, joyfully; "he knows *we* won't try experiments on him; though I *should* have liked to hold the dear little fellow in my hand, as Mr Gubbins did."

"Yes; mamma says," added Richard, "that animals soon know who is kind to them, and that they look to human beings for help in their little troubles. I wish I could be of use to Robin!"

"You will be, when worms are scarce," said Mr Paulett, laughing. "And he will be very grateful and affectionate in return. The sovereignty given to man in Paradise over the animals is even now the heritage of the kind and compassionate. They still look to man for help, unless his cruelty dissolves their allegiance, and disappoints their dependence. I will tell you a pretty story to illustrate this truth."

"A seaman belonging to the wood-party of a ship upon the coast of Africa, had straggled with his companions, and was using his axe freely in the woods, when a large lioness approached him, face to face. The man, for the first moments, gave himself up for lost; but, very soon perceived that the manner and expression of countenance of the lioness were mild, and even mournful, and that he had no danger to apprehend from her. She looked at him, and then behind her, and upward into the trees; and went a few steps from him, upon the path by which she came; and then returned, and then went again; and acted, in short, much as a

dog would act, that wished you to follow him. The seaman yielded to her obvious desire, and she led him some little distance, till, near the foot of a tall tree, she stopped, and looked up, with plaintive cries, into its branches. The seaman, directed by her eyes and gestures, looked upward also, and soon discovered, at a considerable height, an ape dandling a cub lion which he had carried there for his amusement. Of course the petition of the lioness was then easily understood. She could not climb the tree, for, in this respect the lion differs entirely from the cat tribe; and she asked the man to restore her young as well as she could express her wants. The sailor knew that it would be of no use for him to climb after the ape, as it would infallibly be too swift for him, and would besides enjoy the frolic of jumping from tree to tree, and from branch to branch, with its plaything; so he went to work with his axe, and slowly felled the tree, the lioness standing by his side with patient faith in the help of her singular ally. Down at last came tree, ape, and cub. The enraged mother flew on the robber, choked him, and then, seizing her cub, walked away, evidently delighted with the assistance so bravely and kindly rendered to her."

"What a pretty story, papa!" said Emily. "After hearing that, one quite believes Androcles and the lion. But what a wonderful thing it was that the lioness should have thought the sailor could help her!"

"She saw him felling trees, and I believe animals are very observant, and have far greater reasoning powers than we give them credit for possessing; and, also, that they are quite aware of the intellectual superiority of man."

"Well, that is certainly true," observed Mr.

Gubbins," as I could show, if it would amuse Miss to hear something that happened to myself."

"Oh, yes! please tell us, Mr. Gubbins," cried the children. "We do so like stories about animals!"

"Well, Miss," began Mr. Gubbins, "a short time since, I was riding over a common, at some distance from any house, when a pig, which, in the course of feeding, had so twisted the triangular yoke upon his neck, that the narrow portion of it pinched his throat, and threatened him with suffocation, no sooner saw me, than he came as near as to the fore feet of my horse, foaming at the mouth, and struggling to overcome his difficulty. That he believed in the power of a man to assist him was evident; but he had also his fears of that human power, as possibly more dangerous to his throat than all the pressure of his inverted yoke; so that whenever I alighted from my horse with the design of helping him he ran away, and yet, as soon as I was again seated, he returned, continuing to travel with me, close to the horse's fore feet, or as near to my own person as he was able; his mouth still foaming and his efforts to escape suffocation still prolonged. In the end, seeing a farmhouse a little upon one side of my road, I pulled my bridle that way, the pig still accompanying me; till, reaching the yard-gate, I called to some of the people, and apprized them of the pig's presence and misfortune, as my best means of promoting his relief."

"You had doubtless a fair example, here, of the disposition of animals to apply for human aid," said Mr. Paulett; "a disposition which is checked only by their opposing fears."

"I had another example," resumed the school-master, "only a few evenings since. In the brook *which runs before my dwelling*, four ducks and a

drake, the property of my neighbour, are accustomed to swim. Heavy rains had swelled the brook, which was still rising; and across it, near to my door, is a low arching of brick, which causes it to pass, for some dozen feet or so, as through a tunnel. Upon the evening to which I allude, just as the light was departing, I heard the drake squall in a most vehement manner, and in tones so far perfectly intelligible, that I made this profound observation in reference to them: 'There is this only difference between the drake and me. He is perplexed, but he knows what it is about; and I know, from his voice, that he is perplexed, but am perplexed as to the cause.' For the little else that I thought about it, it seemed to me probable, that he and his ducks wanted to get home to bed, and that the yard-door had not been opened so early as usual to let them in; for, that he was addressing himself, and that vehemently, to human creatures, and not to ducks, was plainly to be understood. But the noise ceased, and, for an hour or two, I forgot it; but, upon inquiry next day, I received this full confirmation of the main notion I had formed. The drake had really been calling for human aid, but upon an affair more urgent than I had imagined. From the rapid rising of the brook, one of the ducks had been surprised under the archway that I have mentioned, in such a manner that she could by no means get out, and that neither the drake nor the other ducks could help her; and it was in this extremity, and as the next natural resource, that the drake had called so violently for human help; which help had been given, and the duck saved!"

"All these stories," said Mr. Paulett, "have the advantage of showing us, more and more, how nearly animals, according to their means and situa-

tions, observe, and act, and reason like ourselves; and, as to their looking for aid, either to man or to their fellows when the occasion surpasses their own powers, I remember a recent instance of the latter kind, which we may as well add to our present store of examples. A ewe and her lamb were browsing, last autumn, among some bramble-bushes; into the long and prickly and interlacing branches of one of which the lamb at length penetrated so far, that, his wool being caught, and his legs more and more fettered at every motion, he was wholly unable to get back again. Making, then, his complaints to his mother, she, upon her part, tried, in vain, for a considerable portion of time, to deliver from the pertinacious branches her poor bleating lamb. But, wearied at last, and wholly despairing of her means, she suddenly ceased to make any effort; and, almost as suddenly, ran away across the common, and went completely out of sight; leaving, as I was ignorant enough to think, the lambkin to his hapless fate. While I was musing upon so extraordinary, and, as it seemed to me, so unnatural a proceeding, the ewe re-appeared, and with her the ram, both hastening over the common at a rapid pace. She had been to fetch him; and she had employed some means or other, in her possession, to make him acquainted with the nature of the misfortune of herself and lamb. Both came galloping to the bramble-bush, which they had no sooner reached than the ram, applying the vigour of his legs and horns, tore away the branches, one after the other, till the lamb became free, and was able to leave the spot with his father and mother, bounding and bleating gaily as he went!"

"And animals will help men when they can, in return," said Richard, referring to the previous stories. "Our dear old Nelson pulled Emily out"

of the pond when she fell in, a long time ago. And everybody knows the story of Sir Harry Lee's dog that saved him from the robber; and all about those good St. Bernard dogs."

"Yes," said Mr. Paulett. "We have countless stories of the fidelity of the dog, and of the good intentions and goodwill of animals inferior in intellect. I know a lady who has a tame and very intelligent canary bird. One severe winter day, the window at which his cage hung was left open and a starving Robin flew in on the wires. Unlike the wild birds, Dicky, who had never known want, welcomed his guest very kindly. He actually fed him with his own seed, putting it to the bars to him, and seemed quite delighted at thus exercising his benevolence."

"The dear, kind, little thing!" said Emily, "Was the Robin pleased?"

"Of course! He returned daily for some time, and Dicky was distressed if the window was not opened to admit him. I have seen the same bird put a seed on the lip of a lady, of whom he was very fond. He used to be allowed to come out on the breakfast-table, and would try to feed his shadow which he saw in the silver milk-jug with one of the crumbs thrown to himself. He knew everybody in the house individually, and remembered them after a lengthened absence."

Mr. Gubbins now rose to go. He was impatient to carry the joyful tidings (to hear which he had been sent for by Mr. Paulett) to Farmer Mowbray, and his honest heart rather reproached him for having so long delayed doing his office of herald of good news. But the conversation in which he had been engaged had a peculiar attraction for him.

Emily and Richard, as they smilingly bade him good-bye, begged that he would not try any more

experiments on poor Robin, and the good-natured schoolmaster promised to respect their pet, and also, to take them with him some day to view the curiosities of Cobbler Dykes' cottage. He, then, hurried away to the Farmer's.

Farmer Mowbray heard the good news with honest joy and reverential gratitude. He embraced his weeping wife and hugged his wondering children, and again and again shook the hand of his kind, sympathising neighbour.

"I shall sleep in the old churchyard after all," he said, brushing his eyes with the back of his hand, "and shall smoke my pipe, when I am as aged as poor father was, under the same old walnut-tree. Well, well! I never knew how dear every hedgerow was to me till I was nigh losing them for ever. We don't value our blessings as we ought, Mas Gubbins, and that's certain; I am a grateful man now to the end of my days, and shall pray God to bless 'Squire Paulett and his family, and you, my kind neighbour, every night and morning to the end of life's end!"

A perfect chorus of delight followed these words, and in the midst of it, the delicious cadence of Robin's song stole on the ear.

"Ah! poor Robin!" cried the Farmer, "I thought at one time never to hear thy pretty song again."

"He sings as if he knew how glad we all are," cried the farmer's eldest son.

And so in truth he did.

CHAPTER IX.

"The warbled complaint of the suffering grove."—SONG.

THE season, though not cold, was now considerably advanced. The trees were bare, and the waters swollen. There was much wind and rain; but, in the fields, the daises were still blooming; and in the gardens, though the dahlias had long since been cut down, and consigned, even in their enduring bloom, to the fate of all the gardener's sweepings, they were succeeded by chrysanthemums, pink, yellow, white, and orange; and along with these were still flowering the China-roses and the three-coloured and inodorous violet, or little common hearts'-ease. At intervals the skies were dark and heavy; but at other intervals bright and gay; and though, now, both myself and my mate were glad to pass more of our time within the palings of the village gardens, and especially within the enclosures of Burford Cottage; yet there I mingled cheerfully my songs, at noon, and night, and morning, with those of the wren, and with the twitter of the tit or twit-mouse. One only day the calm of our lives was interrupted by a moment of terror, not proceeding, indeed, from the hand of man, but at least as overwhelming as any that men could have occasioned us!

In the woods, we had to fear the weazles and polecats, those creeping, sly, but fierce and sanguinary hunters, whose leap is capture, and whose bite and suction death; but in the gardens, and upon the commons, sometimes, though more rarely, the hovering hawk, or the keen gliding glead or kite, filled us with the deadliest alarms, and sometimes snatched away, before our eyes, the most

and farewell, Mary and Mrs. and Mr. Gubbins, within whose own garden I have fallen by traitorous hands, a victim to the contempt of all your precepts, cares, and anxious prohibitions!"

I should, perhaps, have added more to this long and deep lament, but that at the moment my ears caught the sounds of distant, but always approaching footsteps. They belonged but to a single pair of feet; and I thought I could distinguish, that, as they were not those of youth, so, also, they were not the stealthy ones of him who fears either discovery or reproof: as for me, miserable and overwhelming as was my condition in the trap, I knew not whether to rejoice in the thought of a speedy deliverance from it, or to faint at the contemplation of the misery that was to follow. The feet drew nearer and more near; the path received them heavier and more heavy; I heard the breathing of the fearful one that was moving toward me; the feet came close to the trap; the nearer sound of the breathing told me that my betrayer was stooping down to it; the upper brick was partly lifted; the light of heaven was partially admitted to me; I prepared to fly, to spring, to struggle, to escape to the woods and fields; but a large, strong hand encompassed my body, despised the bitings of my bill, compressed my wings, and held my feet; so that yielding, or rather powerless in limb, panting, breathless, but still unsubdued in spirit; I was lifted, motionless, from the ground, to behold myself in the hand of—the venerable schoolmaster, Ephraim Gubbins!

New hopes, new doubts, new confusion, new perplexity! Was Mr. Gubbins, this time, my old friend, or my new foe? His right hand restrained *me*; it enclosed me: he did not let me fly; he did *not launch me into the sweet evening air*; yet he

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painted and most tuneful of our neighbours; extinguishing, in an instant, the light of its beauty, and the music of its song! To-day, it was our own turn to be threatened with the beak of a bird of prey; for a hovering hawk, with his piercing eye, had marked us from above, as we were picking and flitting here and there across the lawn; and, after poising for some moments in the air, he suddenly dropped, as it were like a stone, with an aim taken to an hair's-breadth, and directed against my beloved and olive-coloured mate!

What, then, could have saved my mate, and how could she have escaped the descent of the hawk, itself a living arrow, feathered at once in wings and tail, barbed with a sure and penetrating beak, directed through all its flight by an unerring eye, and winged by the force of a ravening will, and weight of bone and muscle; what, but the happy misdirection of Emily's battledore, which, handled at some distance, but which yet, by means of a strong but unskilful blow, suddenly drove the shuttlecock, which she and her brother were beating to and fro in the air, almost to where we were feeding; though, a moment before, we had not believed any one near us! The white feathers of the shuttlecock danced like lightning in our eyes, and we fled from the spot; the one this way, and the other that. Moment of horror and dismay! but still an event that saved and not destroyed us. The danger, however, was not yet at an end.

The hawk himself had been somewhat disconcerted by the curve described by the white shuttlecock, but still more by the direction in which it had driven my mate, so as wholly to defeat his aim.

Wheeling, however, more quick than thought, and *piercing the too-yielding air*, he followed my poor *mate with a swiftness which, first for one moment,*

and then another, seemed to forbid all expectation of escape! Scared myself beyond description, and the whole occurrence hardly occupying an instant of time, I should have been ignorant, while it lasted, of the peril of my beloved; but that by one faint and gasping scream, which she uttered as she flew, I was made to know her danger by the sound of her voice, and to feel the misery of our misfortune! But, the next moment she had flown into the close though naked branches of a lilac-bush, which gave no passage to the hawk's out-stretched wings, even though he turned them obliquely, as, at the first, he seemed resolved to follow her; and she, after two or three times experiencing the shelter of the coverts, and as often becoming exposed again in the open spaces, at length flew breathless through some open rails, and into the adjoining plantation; upon which the hawk gave up the pursuit, and flew into the sky! All was, to me, still confused and doubtful. Had he carried my mate with him in his beak? I had reason to believe, indeed, that he had not; for, in that case, his flight would probably have been only to some neighbouring tree, where, upon the first branch that offered, he would have devoured her! A minute after, my best hopes were satisfied, and all my fears dispelled, when, from beyond the narrow railing, I heard her weak but reassuring voice! I joined her on the instant; and we sat for some time upon the slender and secluded twigs, leaving nature to recompose our spirits, and to still the boisterous throbbings of our hearts! And nature did its office: we grew calm, and recovered our vivacity; though without so far forgetting our peril as not to live and move with more caution and circumspection (not to say timidity) than at any time before!

But the season of Christmas was now approaching; and with it, if mirth became more frequent at Burford Cottage, tranquillity suffered in proportion. Miss Wainfleet, the niece of Mrs. Paulet, had come to spend the holidays, and added much to the enjoyments of the family, particularly those of her aunt and little Emily. Through her talents, cheerfulness, and sweetness of disposition, the house was now enlivened with successive hours of singing, dancing, reading, and drawing, and the performance of many amiable actions and estimable duties; in the recollection of the former of which I cannot omit to mention the kindness habitually manifested by Miss Wainfleet, both in words and deeds, toward Robin-red-breast and his mate!

The weather was still generally fine enough to allow every one to appear in the garden and plantation, and to enjoy walks and drives abroad; so that I had each in frequent view, and could often listen to their pleasing conversation. At other times, during at least the early parts of the day, the mild temperature of the south-westerly winds, and the soft gilding of even a December's sun, encouraged the opening of at least one window of the apartment in which the family sat; and thus, from the adjacent clump of trees and shrubs, I continued to hear both the prattle of the children and the discourse, either grave or cheerful, of those of riper years. As usual, too, the sound of my song brought back the thoughts of the company to me and my species; and, whenever anything was said upon either of those subjects, the reader may be sure that I did not lose a syllable, at least with my own consent. As to that which I am more immediately about to mention, however, it afforded me more pain than pleasure; for I was rather sorry to find that anybody knew so much as, from Miss

Wainfleet's account it was plain they did, concerning Red-breasts' nests and hiding-places!

One morning, when my song, and the talk it occasioned, had reminded Miss Wainfleet of a little poem she had lately copied into her Scrap-book, and when she had vainly attempted to repeat a part of it to her young friends from memory, she fetched, at length, the book itself, and read the whole to her audience; but observing, that it was by no means new, and that she was chiefly led to produce it by its title being appropriate to the case of their present songster. It was a poem, 'On the Singing of a Red-breast late in Autumn.'

"Dear harmless bird! that still, with sprightly lay,
Dost chase sad silence from the drooping grove,
And cheer my lonely walk at close of day,
As pensive through the rustling copse I rove.

Long since, the sportive songsters of the spring
Have ceased their strains, and trembling now deplore
The approach of winter, or with active wing
Speed their swift flight to seek some milder shore.

But thou, contented, still delight'st to live
Within thy native clime, still pour thy song,
Though winter frown, from morn to latest eve,
And spring's gay music through the year prolong.

Dear harmless bird! how bright in thee displayed,
Friendship unbiassed and sincere we view;
Which still, when wealth and short-lived honours fade,
'Mid Fortune's chilling frowns continues true!"

The reading of this little poem in compliment to my species (I could not take it as peculiarly addressed to myself) was only a signal for the recollection and reading of more, till the list almost as much surprised as flattered me; showing, as it did, a new page in our history, or painting, in still stronger colours than I had before seen it, the

warm and tender interest which such numbers of the human race (including those distinguished for sentiment and genius) have taken in the charms and ways of little birds so humble as ourselves! Richard, Emily, Mr. and Mrs. Paulett, could each, either from memory, or by bringing forward great or little books, add something to this store; and now, for the first time, I began to admire the songs of men and women, nearly as warmly as they admire ours! In one particular, above all, they reflected as much honour upon the singers as they imparted pleasure to my bosom, and might have been the songs of angels, rather than of men, or even of birds; for all were songs of mercy; all spoke of tenderness and love, directing, as they likewise did, that virtue, and that emotion, to the regard and welfare of us Robin-red-breasts!

In the course, however, of these readings and recitals, it chanced, that in not one of the best, but one beginning with this promising line—

“Hark at the little Robin’s *double note*,”

the poet had ventured upon a stanza descriptive of Red-breast’s nest:

“And, mark! when Spring enamels the bright scene
With boundless carpet of enlivening green;
When flowers, eye-pleasing, rear their showy heads,
And odoriferous scents through ether spreads;
Then does the Robin build in neighbouring *tree*,
And cheerful breeds a helpless progeny.”

But Richard interrupted the reading of the poem, to observe, that he had never been able, till then, to hear where the Red-breasts built their nests!

“Ah, Richard,” said Miss Wainfleet, “and, even now, you have heard that which is not true! You must not believe everything which you hear read

out of a book, but often wait till you see whether or not some other book, or other authority, does not contradict it; and if this latter case should happen, then you must inquire still further, and find out which of the two stories may be trusted! As to poetry, it ought to be the depository of truth upon all subjects, for it is the proper voice of learning and philosophy, as well as of sentiment and imagination; but poets, like other writers, are sometimes deficient in knowledge, and the present is one of the examples. I find, from writings of more particularity and credit upon such a subject, that the Red-breast, no more than the lark, ever builds in trees, but always upon or near the ground."

"Oh, tell me," said a playmate visitor, "how to find a Red-breast's nest upon the ground; for that would be so much easier than to climb a tree!"

"I have no wish," said Miss Wainfleet, "to enable you to find one; and, fortunately, these birds themselves take so much pains to conceal the spot, and to prevent your suspecting their retreat, were you ever so near to it, that I can tell you all I know about it, and yet be free from any fear of leading you to the discovery. The Red-breasts somewhat vary the situation of their nests, according to the opportunities of concealment which particular places afford to them; but, in England, they usually build by the roots of trees, in some snug situation near the ground; or else in the crevice of some mossy bank, or at the foot of a hawthorn in hedge-rows, or in a tuft of strong grass, or where they can hide beneath the covert of the closest woods."

"But," said Emily, "I think that nests about the roots of trees, or in the crevices of banks, or in tufts of grass, must be very easy to find out?"

"Not so, my dear," replied Miss Wainfleet;

"because, besides their other precautions, these little birds have many ingenious ways of contriving the path to their nest to be so obscure, and to have so little the appearance of what it really is, that they commonly deceive all strangers, and even nothing but an extreme mischance is likely to discover it.

"The pretty creatures!" said Emily, "I shall now love them more than ever, from thinking of their ingenuity and carefulness! But pray tell us what they do?"

"Where the situation," answered Miss Wainfleet, "is less naturally secure than usual, they often cover both the nest and a long winding entrance to it with leaves; so that the whole seems an accidental little heap, under which they find their way through an opening too small to be taken notice of by any but themselves!"

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Paulett, in admiration. "Are these birds to be thus added to the number of those ingenious contrivers and mechanics with which animated nature so extensively abounds?"

"It is said so, I assure you," replied Miss Wainfleet; who was about to continue in her own way; but yet yielded to the impatience of Emily, who begged to know of what material the nest was made of.

"Of dried leaves, my dearest Emily," answered Miss Wainfleet, "for its outermost shell; but, within this, of moss and the hair of cattle; and lastly, of feathers plucked from the breasts of the parent birds themselves."

"And how many eggs are there in a nest," demanded the birds'-nesting neighbour; "and what are their marks and colours?"

"The eggs," said Miss Wainfleet, "are said to be commonly from five to seven; so that the Red-breast has a large brood, for so small a bird; and

they are of a gray or dullish-white colour, with reddish streaks."

"It is plain, then," said Mrs. Paulett, recurring to what had been said about the coverings of leaves, "that the Red-breast has the habit of making these coverings; and it is in this manner that may have originated the general tradition of their burial of the dead beneath a pall of leaves, upon which the famous and tender incident in the ballad of the 'Babes in the Wood' appears to have been founded?"

"Yes," said Mr. Paulett; "and it would not surprise me, if, besides covering their nests with leaves, it is really their habit to cover in the same manner the dead bodies of their species, if such, in some few instances, should fall in their way. It has lately been discovered, that the common mouse actually buries its dead!"

"Pray tell us of this discovery," said Miss Wainfleet.

"The story," said Mr. Paulett, "will display the ingenuity of mice under more views than one. It lately happened, in a warehouse, at one of our custom-houses, that a bag of corn was sought to be deposited in such a manner as to be safe from rats and mice; and, for this purpose, it was hung upon the beam of a pair of scales, which beam itself depended from the middle of the ceiling. After a time the bag was to be removed; and it was then found, very contrary to the expectations of those who, as they thought, had hit upon so infallible a contrivance, that a swarm of mice had not only found their way into it, to feed upon its nourishing contents, but even to establish their abode! A general rout and slaughter was the immediate consequence. The bag was removed; and some of the mice *escaped, but many were killed, and left dead upon the floor.* Within a few hours afterward, the ware-

houseman returned, proposing to himself to sweep away the dead mice. To his surprise, however, not a single mouse remained; and he found himself obliged to account, in the best manner that he could, for the clearance that had been made. A day or two now elapsed, at the end of which it became necessary to make another removal near at hand, and this last was of a pile of reams of paper; but, in so doing, the bodies of the dead mice were found in small spaces between the reams; each body carefully—or, as some would say, decently—covered, with small pieces of paper, nibbled from the reams!”

“Well!” cried Miss Wainfleet, “who could have believed so much?”

“If we reflect for a moment,” returned Mr. Paulett, “upon some of the many other practices, of all, or of particular species of animals, I think that there will remain nothing to amaze us in the discovery that mice practise the burial of their dead. The brown-beetle buries birds, and even moles; and places its young under the bodies for warmth and food. This accounts, doubtless, for our so seldom seeing the dead body of a bird lying about: the little sextons in brown and black remove them. Ants also remove and carry off their dead, if they do not bury them. I must make one more remark,” added Mr. Paulett, “and it is this: that it affords an interesting topic of research, to trace to how very wide an extent all the practices or usages, and all the arts and contrivances and inventions, at any time resorted to or devised collectively among mankind, exist and have previously existed, though but scattered here and there, among the various species of inferior animals!”

“I know,” said Miss Wainfleet, “that many examples have been mentioned; as, of building, weav-

ing, sailing, and such arts; and that mankind have been said to be indebted for the same to the force of imitation?"

"I do not believe," said Mr. Paulett, "in our dependance upon imitation in these cases. I think that men, through their various necessities and wishes, and through their comprehensive reason, have been the inventors, for themselves, of the same things with which the inferior animals have been able to supply their limited necessities respectively. It is marvellous, in the meantime, to see, how, day by day, we discover that almost every work of human art has been anticipated in nature, either animate or inanimate!"

"Make us understand this the better, my dear," said Mrs. Paulett, "by giving us an instance, and a new one; for we have heard again and again of the arts and ways of the nautilus, the bee, the wasp, the ant, and a hundred more."

"I may mention, then," said Mr. Paulett, "a late account of the most striking description, belonging to a water-insect, observed at the head of a little stream which falls down the side of a mountain in Ireland; and displaying, in the water, the entire contrivance of one of our balloons or parachutes, intended for the air. This insect provides for itself, in its worm or caterpillar state, a covering or dwelling similar in principle to that of the membrane in which the chrysalis of the silk-worm is lodged beneath a ball of silk; but with the difference, that, instead of having, like the latter, no opening whatever, it has a small opening to the water, upon the undermost side, as a parachute has a large one to the air, though for a wholly different purpose. The paper membrane, or bag, is shaped exactly like a Florence oil-flask, or with only a shorter neck; is composed of a delicate, opaque

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and cream-white skin; and is about two inches in length, and one in diameter. It is suspended, mouth downward, in the current of the water, by means of a most perfect silken network, of a gray colour; which is thrown over it exactly as the network over a balloon, but of which the lower cords or lines, three or four in number, and about an inch in length, instead of being drawn together at the bottom, to hold a car, or other single weight, are each attached by the insect to as many little stones, by way of anchors! The balloon, in this manner (itself containing only the insect and air), is held effectually buoyant, at a safe distance from the bottom of the stream. If it were in still water, it would float upright; but, in the running stream, it is kept dancing in an inclined direction; and this, in the instance observed,* was at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and about two inches below the surface. The current, in driving the closed and globular head of the bag in its own direction, and in thus giving to the whole bag a slanting position, causes the mouth or lower extremity of this balloon, or parachute, or flask, to stand invitingly open to whatever minute objects come down the stream; and, within this floating or diving bell (for it has the principle of the diving-bell, as well as of the balloon), sits the caterpillar, concealed like a spider at the head of his web; and ready, like that land insect, to devour the prey which comes within his reach! But as this water-caterpillar, in the article of food and other things, has higher wants than a chrysalis or grub, so he has higher capabilities, and more power over his paper bag. Staying within it, he can compress it, so as to exclude the air, or

* *At Grumley's Well, by R. Williams, Jun., Esq., of Drums-
condra.*

ever else he chooses to reject, or let it open, take its full bulk and form; or, at his own will also, he can leave the bag, and return to it. If the bag be taken out of the water, the pillar comes quickly from its inside, and shows to be of about an inch in length, a dark-brown r, and a soft smooth skin; its head large, red, and divided into two lobes, and moved with a strong appearance of voracity. The parrot balloon, and its inhabitant, the examination which supplies me this description, was found, nine or ten others, arranged or moored like many fishing-boats (another similitude!) across much of the main stream, and beneath the over of an overhanging stone (other resemblances to human wisdom!) which seemed to break the force of the water that brought to them their prey; thus by diminishing their danger of being carried away from their moorings, and detaining the objects of their research for better chance of capture! If the balloon is touched in the stream, the caterpillar gives its emotion by *spitting*, or by sudden jets from the mouth."

The company, when Mr. Paulett had thus finished, was unanimously of opinion, that few examples of contrivances, and sagacity of the in-animal creation could be adduced to surpass which had appeared in this account of a water-pillar; and Mr. Paulett observed, that such a ledge as this was attractive and useful for persons of all ages, and he was particularly pleased that it fell in the way of children: "No other," he said, "affords them as much delight; and, at the same word, it teaches them both to admire creation for its works, and to feel that respect for its laws, upon which is to be founded so large a part of their due esteem, and of their considerate

treatment. "Admiration," he continued, "is the source of love, and love of tenderness; and it is only as we admire and respect the animal world that we shall ever be merciful to it!"

CHAPTER X.

"Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind!
Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens
With food at will: lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict.

——The labourer ox
Stands cover'd o'er with snow, and now demands
The fruit of all his toil."—THOMSON.

CHRISTMAS was now gone by, and the New Year come in: the days were lengthening fast, and the season, true to its ancient English character, was reaching the severest cold.

"As the day lengthens,
So the cold strengthens,"

was the observation of English antiquity; and its truth continues to this time. The sun had passed the winter solstice, and had now entered, therefore, into the winter quarter; and the winds, which, during the preceding division of his course had so often blown tempestuously from the south-west, bringing with them torrents of rain and warmth of temperature, now began to blow from the north-east, freezing every pond and stream, and causing fields, and woods, and houses to be covered with wide sheets of snow. The surface of the earth, too, after the long interval from the preceding *summer*, had now reached its coolest state; and *thus had every circumstance arrived at the annual*

combination for producing the completest change of the weather, and that long period of struggling heat and cold, and moist and dry, which, as usual, and as of yore, was to reach up to the summer solstice, and beyond; so that, as so commonly happens in England, and as it was written in England two hundred and fifty years ago—

“Winter lingers in the lap of May.”

For me and my yet more timid mate, this was the time to draw nearer than ever to our constant benefactors at the Cottage, upon whom, indeed, we placed our principal dependence; and where crumbs, and even cheese, were now freely scattered, at the wish of Mr. and Mrs. Paulett, by the hands of Emily and Richard, their good and pretty children. My mate was far too shy to enter the parlour, when, in spite of the weather, the window was opened for our welcome; or even to perch upon the cross-stick which had been set in front of the window for our encouragement. She stayed at a warm exposure in the garden, where the wall-fruit trees were hung with matting, and the early strawberries and salading were nursing into forwardness; and thither, when I had swallowed a few of the smaller crumbs myself, it was my wont to carry one of the largest in my bill to her. A few such crumbs sufficed, for the children, now, threw large crumbs oftener than small; and when my mate was thus supplied, and my own hunger more than appeased, I had leisure to show my gratitude and contentment, either by saluting my entertainers with a song, or by staying to listen to their discourse.

On one of the most dismal of all the mornings of *the season*, when the air was dark and thick with *the large flakes of snow* which, hour after hour,

continued to fall, I made, as I now punctually made, my visit to the windows of the Cottage, one of which was soon opened for my reception. I found Mr. Paulett engaged in giving encouragement to the minds of his children, in all their kindly thoughts of the duties to man and beast which winter imposes upon such as have any help to give. My appearance, however, in some degree diverted the conversation. The melancholy state of the atmosphere had made me more forgetful even than usual of all doubt or ceremony upon entering the friendly parlour. The few insects, and few remaining seeds, which were still commonly to be found about the cucumber and melon beds and glasses, or where the gardener was preparing his ranunculus-beds, or his pea-sticks, were quite denied to us upon this hapless morning; and I arrived breathless, drooping, and anxious, at the parlour, and entered it without a thought, excepting that of joy for my welcome and my food! Mr. Paulett observed this; and was led by it to bid his children recollect how justly the poet, whom here he quoted, had described the effects of weather such as they saw upon the Red-breast:

——“The fowls of heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The Red-breast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to *trusted* man
His annual visit. Half afraid,
He first against the window beats: then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o’er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is:
Till more familiar grown, the table-crumb
Attract his slender feet.”

from birds he passed to beasts; and talked at length of the consideration which the wisest and best of men have always entertained for those who are the companions of mankind in half the good and half the evil of the universe. He remarked upon the special care of ancient moralists and lawgivers to assist upon the exercise of humanity toward the domesticated animals which men rear for their use, and the condition of whose lives so much depends upon the humane treatment they receive. Amongst some of the Eastern nations," he observed, "the laws of their religion protect and, in a degree, provide for the inferior animals. The belief in the transmigration of souls led, of course, to a tender respect for the creatures into which their beloved friends they had lost might have been reborn, and we find, accordingly, amongst the Jews, hospitals for sick and injured animals. Jewish laws, also, were tender of the creatures passing on, or dwelling in the neighbourhood of

It was very probable, that a people accustomed to sacrifices of living animals, might lose feeling for them, and grow cruel, or at least thoughtless, with regard to them; therefore the Eternal and Merciful Father, without whose Providence not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, gave such precepts as these to the Jews:—

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the tree, in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young;

But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.—

. xxii. 6 and 7 verses."

"*ut, papa,*" interrupted Richard, "it was surely

cruel to take the young, and leave the mother-bird to grieve for them?"

"Probably the young would only be taken for food; and this law, though permitting them to kill creatures for sustenance, forbade unnecessary destruction or cruelty, as well as preserved the species; for the dam might hatch another brood. The grief of the poor bird would be very short of course, and her loss easily supplied. But here is a law of still clearer goodness and compassion:—

"'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.'

"The poor beast was not to look with a vain longing upon the food beneath his hoofs, but to be allowed the due reward of his labour. And again, in the Proverbs, we read:—'The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.' And in the catalogue of God's mercies, His care for the lower creatures is never omitted.

"'The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted:

"'Where the birds make their nests; as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and so are the stony rocks for the conies.

"'The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.'—Psalm civ. verses 16, 17, 18, 21.'

"And God has made the leviathan—just 'to take his pastime' or, to 'play' in the 'wide sea!'"

"Papa," said Richard, "when I think of the wickedness of ill-treating animals, and of the care of Nature for their happiness, I sometimes fancy that it must be very wrong to kill and eat them; and it seems strange to me, that so many animals *should kill and eat each other?*"

"*My dear Richard,*" replied Mr. Paulett, "though

you are a very little boy, you need not be ashamed of finding difficulties in the right understanding of these questions ; for very great men, and men in all ages and circumstances, have frequently been perplexed by the same thoughts. Philosophers have argued, and poets have sung, upon these very subjects. Some have thought it wicked for men to eat the flesh of animals ; some have thought the flesh-eating animals to be themselves wicked ; and some, discarding both of those fantastical ideas, have yet been at a loss to reconcile the obvious intention of Nature in these respects, with the mercy which we yet acknowledge to reign over all her works, and with the care which, as you so properly say, she extends to the happiness of her creatures. But, notwithstanding the perplexities of little boys, and of great men, and the notions which have sometimes obtained through countries and ages, the sound and rational view of the whole subject is very clear, and entirely consistent with the ordinary practice of mankind, and with what we observe in universal nature.

“ Let us consider the general law of creation, that so many birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, and insects should subsist by preying upon so many other insects, reptiles, fishes, beasts, and birds ; after which, we may turn with the more advantage to the practice of mankind in particular, who live, in this respect, like the other classes of the whole animal world. Now, this law of nature, so far from being an unmerciful law, and so far from its promoting misery and suffering among the animal races, is the most merciful, the most tender, and the best defence of the inferior animals against suffering and misery, which it would have been *possible to devise*. Unless their lives were terminated by a sudden and violent death, their bodies

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after a gradual growth, would be subject to a gradual decay; and that decay would have covered the earth, and filled the air and waters, with pitiable sights, and suffering miserable creatures. Now in what other way, than by their feeding on each other, could the law of nature have so well provided, at once the means of death and the removal of the bodies of the dead, combining this with a plan for sustaining other lives through the destruction of the first? In what other way could the inferior animals have been made to die, either with so little suffering to themselves, or so little inconvenience to their survivors, and, at the same time, with so much advantage to the plan of nature in general, by the sustenance of so many other animals? The flowers fade upon their stalks; their colours change; their leaves shrink; and they become manure for future flowers; but animal life could not perish thus mildly. Even a swarm of flies could not die, and putrefy upon the surface, without the production of the seeds of pestilence. Then, as to the sustenance of other animals, we may observe, that the feeders upon herbs, and juices, and animalcules, commonly prepare, in their own bodies, the food of the higher or the larger animals; just as, in human art, one artisan prepares materials for other artisans to work upon. In the economy of nature, everything and every creature performs its allotted part; and all, while flourishing or choosing for themselves, work out their share in the grand design, and toil, although unconsciously, and while they think themselves at play, for the good of all.

* It is, therefore, a merciful and not a cruel provision that animals should feed upon each other. *It is not in putting animals to death, nor in eating their flesh, that we show cruelty, but in ill-using*

hem while living; in omitting to help them when we have it in our power;—it is in these things that consist the cruelty and wickedness, and of these the beasts of prey are innocent, while men are often guilty.

“It is, also, a part of the mercy due to these creatures of our common Father, to inflict the permitted death as quickly, and with as little pain as possible. No indulgence of epicurean fancies should induce us to sanction the slow and torturing death of any animal. Nor should any notion of their insensibility to pain make us torture poor insects, as I have seen many boys (and even some men) do, by impaling butterflies on a card, spinning cock-shafers on a pin and string, and similarly cruel amusements, or experiments.

“Remember the words of our great and benign poet, whose large heart embraced the whole creation,—

—“The poor beetle, that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.”

Thus did Mr. Paulett instruct his children, and, unconsciously, myself.

I resolved, henceforward, never to hurt, tease, or frighten insect or worm, but to swallow it with all possible despatch, putting it to as little pain as might be. And I earnestly wished that all the little boys, and self-called naturalists of the world, could have heard this wise teaching; so that they might never again cage or blind poor birds, or try experiments on them to their discomfort and misery.

Truly it was a pity that Mr. Gubbins and Cobbler Dykes had not been listening there, as I had!

CHAPTER XI.

“He that walks in the sunshine (of truth)
Goes boldly forward the nearest way.”—IDLER.

“EMILY,” said Richard Paulett to his sister as she entered the breakfast-parlour one very cold morning,—“Emily, do you know we are going home with Valentia Wainfleet, you and I, and papa, and mamma, to stay for a whole week; and George Leslie and Edward Brown are to go also. And won’t it be jolly!”

“I am so glad, Richard!” cried Emily, clapping her hands; “I do so like Aunt Wainfleet’s fine old castle: it is so grand and old, and frightens me so pleasantly!”

“What geese girls are,” said her brother, rather contemptuously; “frightens you pleasantly! *I* don’t know what it is to be frightened, of course, but I should think it anything but a jolly sensation.”

“It is very vulgar to talk slang!” retorted Emily: “‘jolly’ indeed!” She would have added more, but at the moment a little white hand was laid on her shoulder, and Valentia Wainfleet’s voice uttered the word—“Hush!”

Both children turned eagerly towards her, for they greatly loved her, and after kissing her, and wishing her good morning, they began thanking her for the invitation to Ruthin.

“We shall be delighted to have you, if you don’t spoil our pleasure by quarrelling,” she said, a little seriously.

“Quarrelling, Valentia!—we never quarrel.”

“Well then, by constantly saying rude or sharp things to each other. It is a very unamiable and *unchristian-like* habit, and has pained me ever

nce I came here. Richard takes, I must say, a very unmanly pleasure in ridiculing his little sister; and Emily retorts by sharp, cross words."

Her little cousins looked very silly as she spoke.

"Promise me that you will try to correct this fault, Richard; *your* kindness will insure Emily's good-nature."

"Well," said the boy, a little shyly, "I won't laugh at her again; I did not mean to vex her: I beg your pardon, Emily," and he held out his hand.

She threw her little arms round his neck, and sobbed out: "I was cross, too, dear brother; I won't be cross again,—no, not even if you *do* laugh at me: I know I am not so wise as you are."

A warm embrace sealed this reconciliation; and they then began to discuss, with great eagerness, the coming visit.

"And it was so kind of you, Valentia, to ask our mamma to invite George and Edward too," said Richard. "George is a capital fellow; and Edward is first-rate at cricket and all sorts of games."

"I like George very much, myself," said Valentia; but there is something sly about Edward Brown. I would have been unkind to leave him out, but I do not think he is a very nice boy."

"Ah, that was because he wanted to take Robins' nests!" cried Emily.

"Not entirely," said her cousin, smiling; "that could have been an ordinary boy's fault: I am afraid Edward has far greater ones. I say this to warn you and Richard from being led into any mischief by him. You must try and improve him."

Mrs. Paulett's entrance, and the commencement of breakfast, interrupted their conversation. Two days afterwards they left home for Ruthin Castle, a fine old building, which retained the name and

dignity of the ruins still remaining in the park to testify to its former grandeur.

Mrs. Wainfleet was a stately lady, whose quiet habits and feeble health made it necessary for the children to have a sitting-room wholly appropriated to their use; in which they passed the day, making their appearance only after dinner at the dessert. But Valentia was indefatigable in entertaining her guests, and devoted her whole time to them, providing all sorts of pleasant amusements for them.

When the weather was fine, they had ponies, and rode with her, scampering over the downs and breezy heights, rough-shod, and daring the sharp cold, which did but give their cheeks a brighter glow, and their eyes a more joyous light. Or when the frost was very hard, they skated on the piece of water, while Valentia and Emily watched them from the bank. If it rained, they played in the house. The elder cousin had provided all sorts of games, bagatelle, chess, draughts, battledoor and shuttlecock, and *les Graces*, which they played in the great gallery of the Castle. The nature of the building, also, rendered a game at hide-and-seek one of intense interest. A certain boundary was given to them which they were desired not to pass, but within which they had full liberty. And great was the winter glee of these young ones.

Valentia furnished their room with books of all kinds, and hung her pet canary in the window that it might add its song to the mirth of her guests.

One day, about the middle of their visit, the weather confined them entirely to the house. The snow fell incessantly, and the wind howled wildly over the moors, and burst in hurricanes from between the hills, drifting the rapidly-falling snow into the wildest and most fantastic heaps. The

children felt a depression and awe over them which they could not shake off; and, as it happened, Mentia was confined for the day to her bed with a cold. They were left almost entirely to themselves, and grew very listless and dreary. After a time, George and Richard seated themselves to a game of chess. Edward took a book, and Emily, after talking to the canary for a little while, stole out of the room, and began to wander about the passages and corridors, occasionally pausing to gaze drearily out of the windows at the snow. At last her wandering steps crossed the boundary fixed for the children, and she stood at an open door, before which hung a mask curtain. Emily had never seen such a scene at a door before, and her curiosity was so excited that she could not resist the wish to see it, and peep in. She beheld an apartment, which to her appeared a boudoir, fit for a fairy queen. It was an octagon room. The panels were exquisitely painted with flowers and fruit, and edged round with wide margins of looking-glass, in which Emily beheld her small figure reflected on every side. She stole gently in; a bright fire threw a ruby light around, the carpet yielded to her footstep, and the tables offered to her admiring gaze all sorts of *couture*, and elegant ornaments. She was charmed: she examined everything with childish delight and curiosity; but at length her attention was riveted on a very tiny, beautiful, ivory case. She opened it; it contained a small thermometer, an instrument with which the little girl was not acquainted; for those days it was not, as it is now, common in every house. Whilst she examined it, holding it gently in her little warm hand, she suddenly observed the coloured liquid in the tube move upwards: unable to account for this, and half frightened, believing that she had hurt it, she

hurriedly tried to restore it to its case. Alas! it slipped from her hand, and fell hard upon the floor. She stooped to raise it, and on examining it, to see if it was injured, found that the pretty column of fluid had parted, and was broken in halves. She shook it, to try to rejoin it—for surely it must be wet;—but no efforts could make it re-unite, and dreadfully frightened at the mischief she had done, she burst into tears.

“Emmy, what is the matter?” whispered a voice close behind her; and turning in still greater terror, she found Edward beside her.

“Oh, Edward, see what I have done. I have let this thing fall, and the coloured water inside is parted, and won’t mix again! What *shall* I do?”

“It is not water, Em; it is mercury; stuff which seems to be wet, and is not wet at all. But what made you go playing with a thermometer?”

“Oh, I know it was very naughty; but it was so dull; Valentia in bed, and you boys playing by yourselves, so I just walked about and came in here, and did this —— but I did not intend to hurt it!”

And Emily sobbed again.

“Oh, you have not done much harm,” said Edward, coolly; “this is Mrs. Wainfleet’s boudoir, and she would not like any of us to be here, I know; but I often come to warm myself when she’s at dinner, and nobody knows it.”

“But she will find her ther—— what do you call it? broken, and then she will be sure to ask who did it, and I *must* tell.”

“Not she! I can mend that thing. Here, give it to me, and shut the case, and put it back, as if it were all right. I will mend it and put it back in an hour or two, while she is in Miss Wainfleet’s room, and she won’t find it out at all. You need *not* tell anybody about it.”

"Oh, Edward, how kind and good you are! I am so much obliged to you!"

"You are very welcome, I am sure. Come, make haste, it won't do to be found here. And, I say, Em, don't tell Richard or George of it, or they'll be sure to tell of you; they are such queer chaps."

Emily, in great terror of their queen-like hostess' frown, obeyed him, and went with him to his room, where he procured some boiling water in a tea-cup, and the terrified child watched him, as he plunged the end of the tube into it, and held it patiently for some time. By degrees the quicksilver mounted higher and higher, till dispersing the vacuum (as he called the break in the column), the separated parts rejoined each other, and Emily with delight perceived that her mischief had been repaired. She was eloquent in her thanks, and in her admiration of Edward's cleverness; and he grew quite conceited at the homage rendered to his skill. Only one evil remained; the hot water had left a decided mark, or stain on the ivory case, which nothing would remove. Edward, however, to quiet his companion's fears, assured her that it would be "all right" when it was dry, and started off to replace it in its case. This feat was achieved unseen by any one, and the children went back to the play-room.

They found that Richard and George had left it, and were playing at battledore and shuttlecock in the gallery. Emily ran to join them, for she was still very unhappy, and could not bear to sit down to her work or a book.

"Why, Emily, where have you been?" asked Richard, when she joined them.

"Walking about the house," replied the little girl, colouring.

"Don't stray out of bounds," said the brother, giving a vigorous stroke to his shuttlecock. "We are on honour, you know, and it would be very mean to disobey while Valentia is ill."

Emily coloured crimson, but made no answer. She had promised Edward not to tell; yet she felt it would have been a great comfort to have told Richard everything, and to have asked his advice as to whether she should confess her fault or not. Unknown, and unsuspected as it was, it made her very miserable. A secret is always a burden, and one which hides a fault is especially intolerable to an honest, candid child. The little girl could not find spirit to join the boys' play, and "make," as George said, "a trio of battledores," nor could she run for their shuttlecocks, or join in their mirth as she generally did. She stood at the window looking out upon the snow, and feeling as if every blast of wind that howled round the house reproached her for her disobedience and deceit.

Weary at length of her own thoughts, she strolled back to the sitting-room, at the threshold of which, sharp, mournful chirps, which were almost cries, met her ears, and she saw Edward with Valentia's canary in his hand, standing on the hearth-rug.

"Oh, Edward, what is the matter with the bird!" cried she, anxiously; "what are you doing to the poor little thing?"

Edward started as she advanced, and threw something into the fender, then hurriedly crossed the room and placed the poor bird, which still continued its plaintive cries, in the cage. Emily bent down instinctively, and looked in the fender. There lay a red-hot darning needle!

"Oh, Edward, Edward," she cried, "what have you done?"

And she wrung her hands in an agony of fear and pity.

"Well," said the boy, returning, "I will tell you, mam, because, as I keep your secret, you won't, of course, tell mine. I have been trying an experiment. You know that people say blind birds sing so much better than those which can see. Now, I thought I would try on this one, so I have just put out its eyes with a hot darning-needle."

Emily uttered a cry of pity and distress.

"Hold your tongue, can't you!" he said, sagaciously; "I have done it no harm, and it will be much fun when Miss Wainfleet notices how much better it sings."

"Oh, the poor, poor little bird!" cried Emily. "You cruel boy! I am sure when Valentia finds it that she will never forgive you. Oh, dear! what shall I do for poor Dicky!"

And the little girl cried bitterly.

"She won't find it out; and if she does, and you tell of me," said the wicked boy, "I will tell of you, and your aunt will be awfully angry. I know I wouldn't like Mrs. Wainfleet to row me. Be quiet, can't you?"

Emily, who really was in great awe of her sternly and severe aunt, of whom she had seen but little during her short life, struggled with her tears.

"You see," continued Edward, "nobody could do anything for the bird if you *did* tell; so you would be making mischief for nothing, and Miss Wainfleet in bed, too!"

Emily did think it would be unkind to tell her cousin of this dreadful misfortune, while she was unable to come to the bird, or attend to its comfort; and so, very reluctantly, she consented to say nothing of it, thus adding the weight of a still worse concealment to the former one.

They remained only two days longer at the Castle, during which time, in consequence of her illness, they saw very little of Miss Wainfleet. Edward volunteered to clean and feed the bird, and so no one discovered the unhappy fate of poor Dicky during the time of their stay. But to Emily those two days were a period of misery. She expected every hour to hear that Mrs. Wainfleet had discovered the stain on the thermometer, and that she should be questioned about it. Still worse was the thought of Dicky. She felt truly guilty about the concealment of the cruelty practised on Valentia's bird, and could find no rest away from its cage.

All that her little skill could do was done to comfort him. She fed him incessantly; she talked to him, petted him, sang to him, and shed tears when she bade him good-bye. Richard would have laughed at her for her devotion to it, if he had not remembered his promise to Valentia, which, however, he faithfully kept, striving also to imitate the manly courtesy of his friend George in his demeanour to the little girl.

At last they departed for Burford Cottage. George was to accompany them, and to remain for the rest of the holidays. Edward Brown returned to his own home, and Emily, who had taken a great dislike to him, brightened up a little when he was gone.

As the little village of Burford came in sight, home interests began to awake, and Richard, forgetting for a time the Castle, its ponies, and its games, wondered how Robin was, and whether the servants had fed him?

Mrs. Paulett said that she hoped he had not been forgotten, as she had given strict injunctions to the footman to attend to his little wants; and her son was satisfied.

et us see (consulting Robin's autobiography) the week had been passed for him during the absence of his benefactors.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROBIN'S STORY.

"Here he shall see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather."—SHAKSPERE.

AT this time the weather being, as I have said, colder than any Robin amongst us ever remembered, a great affliction fell upon me. One morning when the frozen earth refused to supply me even with a grub, I sought at an earlier hour than usual the hospitable windows of Burford Cottage. Alas! when the scene changed from the glowing, happy scene I had known it! The ground was covered deep with a white unvaried snow. The laurels, the laurel-bushes, and the arbutuses, scarcely showed the green-sides of a few green leaves among them all, and the hedges down as were the whole of their branches without their verdure, their red-berries, and cinnamon-scented blossom-buds, beneath thick coats of snow. The shutters were still unopened, and against them shone the naked panes of glass, through which, every other morning, I had seen the fulness of nature so cheerful, and heard a music so delightful—the voices of many friends: the whole enlivened with the movement of hospitable hands, the groupings of the plenteous breakfast-table, and the lustre and the glow of the golden, ruby fire

I lingered about in the sorrowful impatience of want, till at length they were opened, and then what was the blank within ! At the unusual noise of the opening, and at (to me) the unusual appearance of the servant for that purpose, I had fled ; and on my return, what was there but the naked darkness of a mahogany board ; chairs, in melancholy order, round the walls ; a carpet without one merry, or one kindly foot, to give life and lightness to its dead, dull, worsted flowers ; cold impenetrable glass at the closed windows ; and black coals, and unburnt wood, in the dreary, melancholy grate ! "Oh, life !" I cried ; "oh, speech ! oh, friends ! and oh, busy ways of men ! what are the abodes of men without you ?"

I retired from the freezing spectacle ; I withdrew from the hard-bound spot, made a hundred-fold more frightful by the contrast with what I had experienced at it ! I withdrew to my hungry and expecting mate, and made her as forlorn as myself, by communicating the dreadful and inexplicable disappointment. There remained for us only that search after a breakfast which the previous bounty of our friends made a present hardship.

We flew to the next dwelling, where, however, I looked in vain for the smallest portion of food. We tried a second, and a third, and fourth ; but all with the same ill-fortune. At some, there was nothing cast abroad. At others, the scantiest pickings had been eagerly gleaned, either by the pigs or barn-door fowls, or by the bands of starving sparrows.* At all, the doors and windows were fast closed, to keep out the pitiless cold.

* *It will not be found disagreeable, perhaps, if we attempt to enliven the pages of this sorrowful chapter of our little friend, the Robin, by the insertion of a whimsical remark*

I can scarcely tell through what unhappy impulse we had been induced to take a direction contrary to that of Mr. Gubbins' and Farmer Mowbray's, and were led on, by one delusive prospect or another, in the road that we had chosen. From whatever cause, however, it had thus happened; and

upon *sparrows*, along with a testimony to the "genius" of *starlings*, and a new and pleasing anecdote of the intelligence and attachment of the *pigeon* species.

"It was the custom of Glover, the landscape-painter," says a contemporary, "in the summer season, to visit the most romantic parts of England and Wales, and there to pitch his tent, and draw and colour from nature. His sole companions in these excursions were *birds*, with whom he held colloquy, professing perfectly to understand their language, and to have made them conversant with his own. Pigeons were his favourites, as being the most intelligent: of the latter species, he had one who would sit on his shoulder while he was at work, and who, when evening came, was wont, at a given signal, to fly home, and await his master's return. One day, the artist made a circuitous route, and being interested in sketching some newly-discovered scene, or catching some extraordinary effect of light, forgot the hour; when he was surprised at seeing the little creature [returned and] soaring [hovering] above his head, and at length alighting on his accustomed perch [his shoulder]. When seated there, it expressed, by the querulous tones of its voice, and the sharpness of its beak, its displeasure [at the delay of its master following it home], which Glover was, for a while, puzzled to divine the occasion of. He soon, however, threw him up in the air, and pointed towards the encampment; but his attached friend resumed his old post, and would not be driven away, nor would ever afterwards be induced to lose sight of him; being afraid, as the painter said, that it was his intention to give him the slip! Starlings, he [Mr. Glover] used to say, were possessed of great genius; and being asked which of the feathered tribes were the least so, after a pause, he replied, *sparrows*—not that they wanted talent, but that they were 'vulgar fellows.' — Medwin's *Angler in Wales*.

our wants became so pressing, that we were ready to rejoice over the humblest food, had it been possible to find it. A crumb of potato would have been seized by us with avidity. At length, in a remote nook, we espied the open door of a low and half-ruined hut, and within it the light of a handful of burning fuel,—turf, briers, and cow-dung. It was past the dinner-time of its inhabitants. With the long-sighted vision of a Red-breast, and of a famishing wanderer, I descried, upon its earthen floor, and near its disordered hearth, a few crumbs of the potatoes upon which the family had chiefly dined. I alighted at the stone before the door; and, though the single room of which the hut consisted was filled with smoke from the small and feeble fire—I speedily advanced into the very interior of the dwelling, allured by the few and meagre crumbs before me. Upon a small, uncovered, three legged table, stood the red dish which had contained the meal, and near the chimney the earthen skillet in which it had been boiled; and I could have perched upon, and hopped into either, in pursuit even of a solitary crumb, had one been left; and this in spite of the children and their parents, whom I found there. But, there was nothing eatable that I could discern, except the two or three potato-crumbs which I had at first discovered. Even for these, however, I had rivals. The biggest child was crying for more dinner; and the two smaller, upon all fours, between the legs of the table, were contending with each other for a crumb which, after much search, one of them had just found out. With my little eyes, and little bill, nevertheless, I picked up a few fragments, too *small to gratify*, or even to be seen by my *competitors*; but when, at last, behind the foot of a *stool*, I perceived and laid hold of a large an

dazzling one, with which I thought instantly to fly away to my mate, my luck drew forth the general resentment;—I was driven away like a mouse, or a rat; I dropped the crumb in my alarm, and it was immediately picked up and swallowed by the more successful of the two struggling infants; while the elder, snatching up a lump of ice and snow, threw it after me as I escaped: so barbarous can sometimes be the hand of misery! The sharp-edged and snowy ice-ball struck the tall shoot of a brier in the hedge, and knocked the snow, in repeated flakes, from its rocking stem and spray; but I joined my mate in safety, though without a morsel for her mouth!

Still in search of our morning's meal, we hastened forward, to where the sound of a bill-hook, and the voice of a wood-cutter, singing at his work, allured us with the hope, that a few earwigs, and centipedes or millipedes might be found, dislodged from their wintering-places, among the shreds of bark, and broken branches, and dry leaves, which were doubtless scattered around him, and beneath his feet. Winging our way across several wild and solitary fields, and only stopping occasionally at the hedge-rows in our progress, we reached a little enclosure, in the midst of a wood; and saw, as we expected, the industrious tenant, busy in tying and trimming faggots and bavins, to carry to his customers in the adjacent town. Here we obtained a small share of food; nay, even more than we had reckoned upon. The insects which we could discover were not many; and, besides that, as we approached the faggot-maker and his faggots with much caution, and therefore obtained our meal but slowly, other birds had already carried away a part of that which was to be had. But, to compensate us for all this, even the poor labourer was charita-

hard to dread the loss of such a child. My poor little Emily !”

And she sobbed bitterly.

“I do not despair of her recovery,” said Mr. Paulett, cheerfully. “Children have great vitality, and their complaints are less complicated than those of grown-up people. Our little one will do well yet.”

Mrs. Paulett murmured a hope which sounded like a prayer, and I, having thus discovered that one of my little friends was ill, flew round and round the house, and peeped in at every window, till at last a blind, which had been down for a long time, was raised, and I saw poor little Emily lying on a sofa covered with shawls, and looking very pale and delicate. Miss Wainfleet sate beside her ; and I soon saw the sweet child was recovering. So, perching upon an elm-tree which fortunately grew very near the window, I sang every morning and evening my best song to amuse her. I told her in it of the spring that was coming ; of the tender green leaves, the sweet flowers, the bright sunshine that lingered behind the clouds ; and of the birds that would come across the seas to sing their songs once more beneath the leaves : and I hope she guessed what I meant, for she would smile very sweetly, and even sometimes coax Miss Wainfleet to lift the sash a little way, and put some crumbs of cake upon the window-sill.

Then I used to hop down and eat them, listening to her exclamations of delight at my orange breast and glittering eyes.

At length she fed me once more from the breakfast-room ; and after a time Richard re-joined her (I do not know where *he* had been), and everything went on just as it had been used to do, at Burford Cottage ; but a concluding peril came upon me before the hard season closed.

circumspection ! These wild people were so nearly upon a level with ourselves ; they took the risks of a wandering life, and of an uncertain supply of sustenance, so much in our own manner, and ate, so much as we did, of everything that came in their way ; that we feared, with sufficient reason, lest, while we should be picking up the waste from even a gipsy's meal, a stone, springe, or noose, thrown by one of the sure-handed and lynx-eyed party, might make us prisoners, and throw us, an instant after, into the three-legged kettle, to boil with twenty other ingredients of the savoury soup ! We kept, therefore, for some time, at a considerable distance, and out of sight ; only alighting for an instant, and then disappearing, where the girls and children shook the bushes, or tore away the palings, in the course of their depredations, or where their feet disturbed the snow, and exposed the buried turf. Or we followed one of the donkeys, and her foal, which, in browsing upon the furze, and withered fern, sometimes helped us, by a removal of the snow, and the discovery of something that was eatable. We were not wholly unobserved, in the mean time, by some of the gipsy party, who did not omit to throw us crumbs, calling us by familiar and friendly names, and saying, "Here are wanderers as poor and as independent as ourselves !" We took their bounty with a caution which was perhaps needless, and an ungrateful return, even, for the gift ; but we could not divest ourselves of the terror of a possible mischance, nor of the uncomfortable feelings implanted in our minds by the bubbling of the kettle over the fire ; and by the tail-feathers, and blood, and bowels of a slaughtered turkey, which lay at a little distance from it, upon the snow. But the gipsies dispatched their dinner, and then struck their tent

saying that it would be all they could do to keep their appointment with their friends, at three miles distance, before sunset. Thus they departed, leaving us, to our great joy, the embers of their fire, to warm, for a while, the earth and air around us, as well as the smaller fragments of their meal, upon which to make our supper. We found a lodging for the night, in the hollow of an ancient tree; but did not settle ourselves to sleep till we were placed where no polecat nor weazel could be likely to reach us.

Though we had been far from clearing away the night before all the particles which the gipsies had left, yet so many and hungry had been the other prowlers after food, who had, also, been more early than ourselves, that we found nothing next morning for our breakfast, and had again to take a long and weary flight in search of food.

Mr. Gubbins and his friend would have been greatly astonished if they had known how far from home our necessities had driven us.

Six times, at least, had we slept away from our cozy little nook at Burford—six weary days of fear, and peril, and scanty sustenance, had we passed.

At last I proposed to my mate that we should take the shortest route homewards, since more distant resources appeared exhausted, and many additional perils attended the prospect of starvation in these unknown districts. As usual, my gentle companion believed me to be in the right, and declared her willingness to return at once.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Go not near Avaro’s door !
Once within his iron hall,
Woeful end shall thee befall :
Savage ! he would soon divest
Of its rosy plumes thy breast ;
Then, with solitary joy,
Eat thee (bones and all), my boy.”—LANGHORNE.

winged our flight, therefore, the succeeding, toward our well-known and beloved village, going to find again the relief which we had so long and so regularly obtained at Burford Cottage ; even, if that were wanting, to receive timely aid at Mr. Gubbins’, or at Farmer Mowbray’s, or some happy dwelling of their neighbours. But, to arrive in those sacred haunts, we had now six or seven miles of country to cross, a wide common, a wood, two or three long lanes, several fields, and a bleak, shelterless piece of road, along the north side of a hill.

We pursued the first part of our journey with all speed that we were able ; for it offered nothing to invite delay, and we thought only of the comforts which we promised ourselves at its end. We had accomplished, by noontide, all but half a mile of the distance ; already the orchards and the chimneys were in view, and we rejoiced in the expectation of the kind welcomes that awaited us.

But, while we were thus short, by half a mile, of our destined place of return, it happened that our route led us along the back of a barn, where, in complete seclusion from the north-easterly wind, a sight presented itself very unexpected at the time, and

very woful, as its recollection has ever since appeared to me! Here were two or three men (at that season so peculiarly endeared to our eyes), stretched at their ease upon the ground, and neither singing nor working, but as it seemed to us, engaged only in the most benevolent of undertakings; having left their comfortable homes, and blazing fire-sides, and placed themselves in the midst of a solitude of snow, solely to spread a table for the birds of heaven! These figures were not figures of gipsies; here was no tent nor kettle; no discoloured snow, red with the blood of slaughtered poultry; nor even a fire at which to warm the fingers of these zealots in the cause of humanity, who had taken the pitiless field only to cover it with food for little starvelings like ourselves! At a short distance from those persons (thus judged of in the most favourable manner by our undiscerning apprehension), there lay scattered upon the snow a quantity of seeds, and of crumbs of bread and cheese, sufficient for the Christmas-dinner of whole flocks of sparrows and chaffinches; and abundance still to spare, for the soft bills of a few Red-breasts! We eyed the treasure, it must be allowed, with eagerness; but yet not without care and scruple. We wondered at its exposure; and our wonder, at the beginning, had some alliance with suspicion. We alighted upon the roof of the barn, and took time for consideration. We looked downward, and in advance, and to the right and left, and observed all that went forward. When the sight first presented itself to us, a few sparrows were already making free with the good things put into their way; and coming and going, feeding and retiring, selecting and satisfying themselves, just according to their fancy; the human attendants upon the feast seeming to desire nothing

but the pleasure, fulness, and entire gratification of the guests. By degrees, the company increased; there were sparrows out of number, and all other birds in manifold variety. The temptation was too strong. We yielded to it. Our hunger, it was urgent, and the meat excellent. We went and returned. We mingled, at length, with a crowd of partakers of the feast; and, at the next instant, the upper half of a net, of which the lower (unregarded or uncomprehended as it had been by us), lay over the snow, and left the food only between its meshes;—the upper half of a net was whisked over our heads; and, through the most barefaced treachery, every guest became a prisoner!

The plot had no sooner thus far succeeded, and almost before the astonished captives had begun to flutter their wings, and thrust forth their heads and feet, in vain exertion to escape, than up started the attendants, hitherto so respectful in the distance they had kept, and ran to the nets. They picked out the little birds, as fishermen pick out the fish sticking to the meshes by their gills; and they filled vile, long, low, dark cages, with their prizes, through holes in the tops of the cages, guarded by the legs of worsted stockings! When they had thus packed up their booty, and folded up their nets, the *bird-catchers* walked merrily from the ground; leaped over the next ditch; and, gaining the public road to our village, proceeded straight in that direction.

Fluttering in that net, and now immured in one of those darksome cages, were my hapless mate and I! The bird-catchers, as they travelled, with their snares and their spoil upon their backs, exulted in the success of their morning's work; reckoned up the number of their birds, and of the pence they were likely to make by them; and planned the

disposal of each, according to its kind. Their aim was for the next public-house, where they promised themselves to drink, and to pick and roast the sparrows, and to sell some of the song-birds to the highest bidder. I found that they set but small value upon myself, and less upon my mate: on myself because it was generally known that I could not live long in a cage; and upon my mate, because she was dull-coloured, and no songstress!

I will not depress the spirits of my reader, nor run the risk of wearing out his sympathies, by repeating, in this place, any expression of my grief under misfortune; nor by any attempt to describe my redoubled sorrows during the passing of these melancholy moments. My mate was in the same cage with me, but at the opposite end; and while I, by my strength and good fortune, had secured a place at the wires in the front, and was therefore in the enjoyment of light and air; she, through feebleness, or through ill fortune, was squeezed into a corner at the back of the cage, and almost suffocated amid the multitude of her companion in suffering and apprehension. We exchanged short and mournful cry with each other, but that was all!

We had advanced, however, but a few steps before, as affecting myself alone, a marvellous change took place. My deeply orange breast glowing through the wires of the cage, almost a coal of fire, and shining the more brightly because of the whiteness of the road and hedges, the brightness of the sky, and the blue and yellow of the mouse upon one side of me. A little while came two fair and rosy boys, smartly dressed in brown cloaks, and with rich furs upon their collars. In their hands they had each a pair of skates. They talked of nothing but

strength of the ice, and of the ponds where the ice was the strongest, and the most clear from snow; but, in the course of their speech, they agreed that the best ice they had met with that morning was upon the pond close to "poor Ralph's hovel;" only they had left it almost as soon as they had found it, that they might make haste home, to tell how sick and miserable they had found the lame mole-catcher, and his wife and children. How little Sarah had nearly been frozen to death in the night, or buried during the snow-storm, when she was sent up the long lane to tell the people in the village of their piteous condition, and how she fell, from want of seeing where she stepped; and there lay in the snow, till the gipsies came by, and knew her, and lifted her into their arms, and spoke kindly to her, and brought her back to her sad home. It was not long before I understood, that the hovel which the ruddy boys called "poor Ralph's," was that from which I had been so violently driven away, and of the penury in which I had been so close a witness. I now heard from its young visitors, that during the damp weather before the frost, both father and mother, as well as one of the children, had been ill with scarlet-fever; and that they were left so weak, that even at their short distance from the village, and from any neighbour, it was hardly possible for them to make their story known. I now recollected, too, that this "Ralph" was no other than the rheumatic neighbour, the meeting with whom Mr. Gubbins would so willingly have dispensed with, when upon his philosophical journey to Cobbler Dykes'; and who, to my no small, though momentary resentment, had described Mr. Gubbins and his friend as what he called "two comical rogues!" But, what was of still livelier interest to myself, and what I did not discover

without violent emotion, was this—that beneath the cloak, and cap, and furs, of one of the boys, was concealed my old and good friend Richard; as, beneath those of the other, was a companion whom, upon their return to the Cottage, the day before, Mr. and Mrs. Paulett had brought with them from the house where they had been staying.

“Oh, look at those birds,” cried Richard’s companion, as both, following the bird-catchers along the middle of the road, came within a few feet of the cage which contained myself and my mate: “see, they have just been caught, and I dare say that it was cold and hunger that made them be taken!”

“Why, George!” returned Richard, almost while his friend was speaking, “I do believe that is our Robin-red-breast that I told you would come this morning to breakfast with us, and that Emily cried about when breakfast was over without him, and said that she was sure he had died of famine while we were gone, because Bernard had never thought to feed him at the windows! I shall never like twelfth-cake again,” said she; “for it was while I was eating twelfth-cake that Robin was left in the snow without a morsel of bread!”

“Don’t be foolish, Richard!” interrupted George; “how is it possible that you should know one Robin from another?”

“Oh,” said Richard, “he has not visited us so often, but that I know his looks; and I think that I can see, at this moment, that he knows me, as well as I know him, though he has not a leathern collar on, as he had when he went into Mr. Gubbins’ decoy-cage. Besides, here is a Robin, and *ours did not come to the window this morning, and that is some proof, at any rate; and besides all that, it is a Robin, whether he is ours or not; and so I*

must have him out of that cage, and set him at liberty, be he what Robin he may !”

“I wish we could set all the birds in that cage at liberty,” answered George ; “but you know we have no money left, and these men won’t part with their birds unless we give them money.”

Richard had opened, by this time, a negotiation with the bird-catchers. He ventured, at first, to talk as largely as his companion, and asked what they would have to open the cage doors ? The men, encouraged by such magnificence of idea, and by the wealthy appearance of the boys, boldly answered, that a golden sovereign would be too little ; but that, considering they were young gentlemen, and that they should be particularly happy in obliging them, as well as in seeing all the poor birds flying in the air, they would not mind giving up three times that sum, which they were honestly worth, and contenting themselves with a single sovereign, down upon the nail. But neither Richard nor George, nor both together, had any such sum in their possession, and therefore the scheme of releasing the whole of the birds was given up in a moment. My heart died at the disappointment !

“But what will you take for only that Robin-red-breast ?” said Richard, anxiously, in the same breath.

Here the men consulted with each other before they returned an answer : “Bob would fetch us twopence, anyhow,” muttered, at length, the chief manager to his confederate ; “but as he’s a gentleman, and as you heard him say he ‘*must have Bob,*’ why, just ask him half-a-crown.”

“I would give you half-a-crown, with all my heart, if I had it,” said Richard ; “but though I had one just now, I have only a shilling left. We had each of us a half-crown in our pockets when we came out this morning ; but, where we wer

Due to that good and pious deed
Of which we in the Ballad read.

* * * *

And who but this dear bird beguiled
The fever of that pale-faced child ;
Now cooling with his passing wing,
Her forehead like a breeze of spring :
Recalling now, with descant soft
Shed round her pillow from aloft,
Sweet thoughts of angels hovering nigh,
And the invisible sympathy
Of ' Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John,
Blessing the bed she lies upon.'
And sometimes, just as listening ends
In slumber, with the cadence blends
A dream of that low warbled hymn
Which old folks, fondly pleased to trim
Lamps of faith now burning dim,

Say that the cherubs carved in stone,
When clouds gave way at dead of night,
And the ancient Church was filled with light,
Used to sing in heavenly tone,
Above and round the sacred places
They guard with wingèd baby faces.

This pretty bird, my Emily,
Who cheer'd thy pillow, fain would be
—Now Spring is come, and suns will shine—
Thy true and happy Valentine."

"Very nicely chosen, indeed," said Mrs. Paulett.
"The first portion is by Wordsworth ; the last four
lines are by —"

She paused and smiled—

"Robin, mamma !" cried Emily. "Well, Richard,
you need not laugh ; I am only in fun. Who *do*
you think could have sent the Valentine, and
written those lines, mamma ?"

"Do you really wish to know ?"
"Yes ; of course, mamma."

Richard and his friend now followed us, with wistful looks at me and my cage, sometimes stopping a little behind, to talk apart with each other; and, as I thought, discussing whether or not to propose to the bird-catchers to accompany them to the village, or by what other plan to procure my release upon their own terms. But presently we reached a spot where the road divided into two branches, of which only one led to the village, and the other to a more distant and populous neighbourhood; and here my captors resolved to make a last effort to obtain the half-crown, and, failing in this, to make a virtue of contenting themselves with the shilling which George always insisted to Richard was enough, and would finally be taken. For this purpose they followed the second of the two roads, first wishing the boys a good day, and making professions of regret, that it had not been possible to deal with them for the release of "poor Bob!"

The boys stopped, in confusion, at this decided proceeding of the bird-catchers, exchanging a few anxious words together, as to the plan which they were now to adopt in my behalf; for, as to leaving me in the hands in which they had found me, that (as I had afterward good reason to be convinced) was never for a moment in their contemplation. While they stood consulting, however, but for an instant or two (their eyes strained after the backs of the bird-catchers), the latter suddenly turned themselves round, exclaiming, in a tone of affected kindness and humanity, "Come, young gentleman, we must take your money! It is hard for poor men to make so little of their day's work; but we see you are gentlemen, and that you have taken a fancy to poor Bob; and we should be sorry, for the bird's sake, that you did not have him; and w

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know that gentlemen like you would give us more if you happened to have it about you ; and we dare say that we shall meet you again, and that you will make it up to us another time !"—George was pleased, and Richard was overjoyed, at this conclusion of the adventure. I was speedily taken out of the cage, and, with full precaution as to air, put into Richard's pocket-handkerchief, in which he undertook to carry me in the same manner as Mr. Gubbins. For me, my own release was transport ; but yet an agony oppressed me at the same moment, when I found that nothing was said or done to make my mate the sharer of my good fortune ; and because I felt that I had no means of communicating my affliction to my benefactors, which I knew that it needed but a word to induce them to remove ! I was carried along the road to the Cottage, while the bird-catchers, with my mate, took the other direction ; and I had nothing to lighten the burden of the separation, except the dream (perhaps the vainest of dreams) in which I eagerly indulged, that some accident, as little to be reckoned upon as that which had befriended myself, would befriend her also ; that she, like me, would be delivered, by kind hands, from the frightful cage which had contained us both ; that both would taste again the freedom of the woods and skies ; and that we should meet, ere long, at some accustomed haunt !

I had no doubt of my own release from the handkerchief of Richard, and from all restraint upon my liberty, as sure sequels to my rescue from the bird-catchers. Indeed Richard, as he carried me forward, explained to George that this was his full *intention* ; but that, before setting me free, he was *desirous of the pleasure of displaying me at home, and of giving to his sister, and to all the family,*

that of seeing their lost Robin-red-breast (for such he made himself sure I was) once more alive and well, after the neglect which had proved his misfortune; and also of seeing him fly from their own windows, to return, as he hoped, again and again, as formerly, to receive their daily crumbs, and repay them, morning and evening, with his song!

Richard and George were too delighted with their success, and too impatient to make it known, not to travel with quick steps through the remainder of their way. We were soon at the gate, and soon in the hall of Burford Cottage; and soon was the news of Robin-red-breast's discovery, disaster, and deliverance, the talk of all the house, even from the parlour to the kitchen. With rapture to Emily, and with high satisfaction to Mr. and Mrs. Paulett, the handkerchief was opened; at the bottom of the purse-like form in which it had been held, I lay; and there, when it was doubled under me, as a sort of bedding, upon the table, I continued to lie, panting, half stifled, half alarmed, half rejoicing, half desponding. The children were eager to gaze upon me closely, till Mrs. Paulett had warned them, that by so doing they robbed me of free air, and might, perhaps, frighten and otherwise distress me: the mention of which evils at once altered their inclinations; so that, leaving me upon the handkerchief which supported me upon the table, and from which, as yet, I showed no disposition to rise, they withdrew to their chairs, content only to watch me with kindly looks, and to derive, from every part of my appearance, and from my slightest movements, the food for some tender sentiment, in the expression of *which they were joined and encouraged, both by their papa and mamma.*

But we have said enough of this; let us return to the subject of Valentines.

The Saturnalia were the festivities, the ceremonies, and the annual customs of the feast of Saturnia, or of Juno; called, with reference to this feast, Juno Februata. The day was the *fifteenth* day of February; and upon that day males and females drew marriage lots. This was the custom with Rome Pagan.

“When Rome received Christianity, the cessation of the festival, with all its rites and practices, was necessarily aimed at by the Church; and, in process of time, it happened that the Romish calendar afforded a saint’s-day so near to the day of Juno or Saturnia, that a hope presented itself of turning the popular attention from the one day to the other. The saint’s-day was that of St. Valentine, or Valentinus, a Roman Christian martyr, who was beheaded, or was said to have been beheaded, upon the *fourteenth* day of February, in the year 271.

“Now, the people being still inveterately attached to the drawing of their February lots (whether for marriage only, or for other objects also), the Church proposed to them, that upon the *fourteenth* of February, or feast of Saint Valentine, they should draw, indeed, lots, as heretofore; but instead of *names* of husbands and wives, they should receive the names of *saints*, who should be their protectors during the coming year against sickness, the evil eye, magic, &c. The attempt to change the motive for drawing lots, and the object to be attained by them, was never, however, wholly successful. In the middle ages—the age of chivalry—Valentine’s *day became the period fixed on for knights, or even the people, to devote themselves to the service and defence of some chosen lady or damsel.*

And as a glove was the token of warlike challenge, a pair were presented to the chosen Valentine on that day, who, in return, bestowed a kiss on her future champion. An old lady lately told me, that up to the period of her childhood, it was usual in country places for "Valentines" to walk to church together on the following Easter Day, each wearing a huge rosette of coloured ribbon chosen by the damsel."

"I understand the 'Fair Maid of Perth' better now," said George; "*that* is a Valentine's-Eve story, Richard; you should read it."

"I should like to do so very much, if mamma would lend it to me. Will you, mamma?"

"With pleasure," replied Mrs. Paulett; "you may take it from my bookcase."

"In that story, Catherine does not get a letter; her Valentine was the first person she saw," said George.

"Yes; that was, of course, the older custom," replied Mr. Paulett. "Few people, in those days, could write. Besides, ancient superstition attached the highest and most ominous importance to the first thing seen in the morning; and it was but a consequence, or particular application, of the general doctrine, to believe, that upon a day sacred to marriage, the first unmarried person, seen by another unmarried person, should be the individual divinely pointed out for marriage. By the same notion of omens preternaturally afforded, for human conduct, you must interpret what voyagers and travellers tell you of the worship for the day, paid by the Javanese to whatever *animal* they see first in the morning."

"Thank you, papa, for telling us all these curious things," said Emily. "I have something more to ask you, if it will not tire you."

any tidings of my lost mate. I believe, if I could have found the cruel fowlers I should have boldly attacked them and fought for my beloved's freedom; for there is no courage like that which springs from affection: but my search proved fruitless; and desolate and miserable I returned to my usual roosting-place.

I awoke the next morning very unhappy, and after a short visit to the Cottage, to get the food necessary for my subsistence, which I too well knew was not to be found elsewhere, I resumed my search—constant—minute—persevering; but, alas! always in vain.

And thus day after day passed. I awoke to hope every morning, to fall asleep in sorrow every night. And the pitiless winter grew colder and more cruel. All nature was silent; or if any sound broke the horrid stillness of the frosty air, it was one of pain. It was a very trying time both for men and birds, and needed all the boldness of a Robin's heart to bear me through it. But I knew that spring would come without fail again, and I tried to be patient, and to hope bravely on. The same good Providence that had fed me the last winter would keep me this; and, indeed, could I dare to complain, when such friends were left to me still, as those at Burford Cottage?

CHAPTER XIV.

"What better can we do than prostrate fall
Before Him reverent; and there confess
Humbly our faults and pardon beg with tears?"—MILTON.

THE morning after Robin's release, Mrs. Paulett entered the breakfast-room, with an open letter in her hand, looking very grave and sad.

"Have you unpleasant news from the Castle, Maria?" asked Mr. Paulett, struck by her expression: "I see that letter is from Valentia."

"Yes; very disagreeable news," answered the lady; "poor Valentia's bird is blind; and a bird-fancier, who has examined it, says that it has been made so by a red-hot needle. She is dreadfully distressed about it, both for the poor bird's sake, and because, as it was perceived the very day we left, she cannot but fear it is the deed of one of her young visitors. Moreover, my sister has discovered that some one has been in her boudoir, and stained her beautiful little ivory thermometer; and broken the stopper of a valuable scent-bottle."

"This is sad news," said Mr. Paulett, in a tone of concern; "Richard, my boy, I hope *you* know nothing of these ungrateful returns for hospitality?"

"Oh no, indeed, papa," cried the boy; "I should be quite ashamed of either. Who could have been so cruel to poor Dicky?"

"I dare say it was Ned Brown," said George; "he is a horridly mischievous fellow; but I can't think why he should have touched the thermometer, either. He has a little one of his own."

"It is a most distressing affair," said Mrs. Paulett, "and very unpleasant for all of you, as, of course, until the real culprit is known, you boys,"

least, will be liable to be suspected by the Wainfleets, who cannot be expected to place the same confidence in you which we do, from knowing you so well."

"What a horrid bore!" cried Richard; "but, mamma, Aunt Wainfleet will surely believe you, if you tell her, that I assure her, *on my honour*, that I know nothing of either mischief."

"Nor do I, Mrs. Paulett, I assure you, *on my honour*, too," said George, eagerly; "I should think it disgraceful to behave so."

"I do not doubt you," replied Mrs. Paulett, "and I will give her your assurances. Emily, of course, could have had nothing to do with it?"

She turned to her little daughter, as she spoke, and was surprised to see her with crimson cheeks and tearful eyes; but thinking it was the poor bird's fate, and Valentia's distress, which affected her, the child's agitation did not awaken any suspicion.

"Emily is very sorry for poor Dicky, I am sure," she said, soothingly. "You see, my dear, Valentia has more true cause for grief than you had about Robin."

"Poor, dear Dicky!" sobbed Emily. "Mamma, can nobody do him any good?"

"Alas! no; but Valentia will do all that kindness possibly can to comfort the poor thing."

"I am the more grieved at it," said Mr. Paulett, "because I know your sister-in-law has a dislike to children visitors; and that it was only on Valentia's promising her that *she* would look after them, and take care they did not trouble her, that she would consent to her inviting them. Valentia told me so while we were there, when, one day, I was jesting *with her about her preference of the children's society to ours.*"

"Well, it is a most unworthy return for her kind-

ness," remarked Mrs. Paulett, indignantly; "and it would make me miserable if I thought a child of mine had been guilty of it."

Here the song of Robin, and the duties of hospitality, interrupted the conversation; and, after a very little while, Emily crept out of the room—a miserable, conscience-stricken child.

"I vote, that when we see Edward at school, next half, we tell him we are sure he did it, and make him own the truth, or thrash him well," said Richard, who was to return with George to school. "We have no chance of seeing him here again, for Mr. Brown is gone to the sea-coast, and won't come back for the next three months."

"Of course we will make him own it," said George; "it is too bad to be blamed, or even suspected, for that which we did not do. But it is always the case, if one has anything to do with those ungentlemanly fellows. One is thought as bad as they are, and one gets half their blame, and not a bit of their fun."

"A good lesson for you both, as to your choice of associates," said Mr. Paulett. "You know the old Latin proverb—be sure it is a very true one—and take care whom you choose for your companions. Recollect the old story of the gentleman who, joining and riding with a highwayman, was believed to be one of his associates, and had trouble to escape sharing his fate. But I think we must not condemn Edward Brown unheard: that would be unjust. It is possible he may be no more in fault than you are."

The boys agreed to question him before they decided that he was guilty, and then went out to renew their yesterday's attempt at skating.

As it was holiday-time, the unfortunate Emily was left at great leisure to indulge her own thoughts.

upon the receipt of which Mr. Gubbins shut up his school-room, whitewashed the front of his antique dwelling, new planted the court-yard, and put new benches in the porch, on which, at the close of many a summer's day, he now promised himself that he and his wife should sit, and enjoy a friendly gossip with their neighbours. Here, too (while to a younger man he left the future charge and benefit of his late scholastic occupation), he reckoned upon pursuing, at better leisure, his studies of the stars, and of the beasts and flowers of the field, and birds of the air; and of the Power which made, and holds them all in being. But for these worthy people a still greater happiness was in store.

Their beloved daughter Mary was married to the eldest son of Farmer Mowbray. This, to them, was a lasting joy; for myself, also, the dawn of one; but of this, by and by. Spring-time as it was, I yet picked crumbs at the bridal breakfast of my early patroness. I sang and flitted along the hedges and palings of the fields and village, as she went to church. I entered the church, and rejoiced in the shining sun which lighted up the rural altar, and was reflected from the white surplice of the priest, and from the golden letters of the two tables of the Ten Commandments. I lifted my voice, as well as the rest, when all the happy company returned through the churchyard-gate, and when the bells, as they went, rang out their merry peal. I attended them to Farmer Mowbray's; and, at noon, entered, sometimes the window, and sometimes the door, during their plentiful, though rustic, dinner.

Cobbler Dykes, in a new coat, with his wife in her own wedding gown, was of the party. He had *made new shoes* for the dancers, and he now contributed to the pleasures of the scene by singing *his best songs*. *Lame Ralph, and his wife and children, had a hearty meal, and an ample jug, from*

amid the abundance of the feast, and all the village shared their rural hospitality in one way or the other. Mr. and Mrs. Paulett, in the mean time, had sent suitable presents to the bride; and from Emily, and Miss Wainfleet, came a basket of conservatory flowers, and the prettiest of silk and silver pin-cushions.

I may say, here, that I had often overheard Mr. and Mrs. Paulett, during my latter visits to the cottage, rejoicing in the improvement of their children.

While sharing, in my humble way, the happiness of these kind human beings, I was startled by a dear, familiar note from an adjoining lilac-tree. Forgetting in an instant crumbs and carols, I flew to the spot, to be sure my ears did not deceive me. It was, indeed, true! She was there! My dear, long-sought, long-lamented mate! No words, with which I am acquainted, can express our mutual joy and happiness; even the much more expressive language of Robins failed us at the time, and we could utter nothing but broken chirps.

When we had regained a little composure, my mate told me, in notes tremulous with joy, that when the nets were opened, the bird-catchers had set her free. She was of no use as a caged songster, and even the cruel fowlers had shrunk from eating the sacred household bird. So she had escaped roasting in virtue of her race (it is a good thing to come of honest family!) and her personal insignificance had protected her from captivity.

The severe weather, and the great distance from home at which she had received her freedom, had kept her, thus long, from her usual haunts; but sunshine and spring had brought strength and courage, and she accomplished (guided by her loving heart), a journey which would have truly astonished Mr. Gubbins.

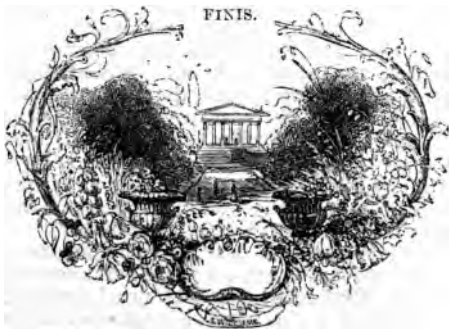
It seems that the sound of Cobbler Dykes' singing had induced her to pause in her flight, on the near lilac-bush, and thus our sympathy with the joy of men had led to our own re-union! I had a great deal to communicate in return, as the reader is aware; and it was almost sunset before our mutual tales were told.

I think it best to close my history with that day's sunset. For who knows, even in the life of a Robin, what a day may bring forth? and as my readers have, I doubt not, grieved with me, I should like to leave them only, the possession of my joy.

"All yet seems well; and if it end so meet
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet."

Farewell therefore, kind mortals, till the drear
winter once more enfolds us; *then*, for my sake,
beseech you

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